Infinite Loops-Gundam SEED

By: RedemptionWarrior

Cosmic Era Gundam in the Infinite Time Loops.

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Chapter 1

As the title implies, this is part of the fanfiction project called the Infinite Loops. Essentially, reality is broken and the only way to stabilize it is to have the various universes run on time loops. Now, there are rules that must be abided by and they are as follows

Loop mechanics (general) :

1) One person in a Loop, often the main character, is an Anchor. They are the person who first starts time looping.

2) There is always at least one Anchor present in a given Time Loop snippet, though it may not be the local one.

3) The standard pattern for a loop is that the Anchor (and whoever else is Looping there) come to awareness in a loop at a particular point in the story. From there, events will play out as influenced by the Loopers present, acting with the benefit of their foreknowledge, until either a predetermined end point is reached or all the Loopers have copped it.

4)To be Awake is to be aware of the time loops (that is, to have gone back in time this time.)

5)The Anchor is the only character guaranteed to be Awake. Even after others have started looping, it is mostly random as to whether they will be Awake this particular loop.

6) Crossovers, fusions, and alternate pasts can also take place. It is perfectly possible, for example, to have the characters Awaken into a loop which conforms to a fanfic universe rather than reality.

7)Loops do not have to be in chronological order, but it is strongly preferred that they not require a mutually contradictory order (where A must be before B and B must be before A.)

8)Just about every Looper is very, very stir crazy.

That should do it for the intro. If you want to learn more, the Infinite Loops can be found in the Spacebattles forum.

Kira Yamato found himself very confused. Last thing he remembered was falling asleep next to his girlfriend Lacus Clyne after the end of the Second Bloody Valentine War. Now, he was back in the gazebo he had used for shade while dealing with the assignments given to him by his teacher, Professor Kato, before the first war reached the space colony he lived in, Heliopolis. Just like what he remembered, he was listening to the news of an attack by ZAFT on the Taiwan island of Kaohsiung where a Federation Mass Driver was located.

It's too real and natural to be a dream...and I don't have more fingers than normal , Kira determined, comparing it to his memories and counting fingers as part of a lucid dream reality check. Only moments after doing that check, he heard the very familiar sound of robotic wings beating in flight as the AI bird his long time friend had made for him landed on top of his open laptop.

"Birdie?" it said in a questioning tone as it tilted its head at Kira. Within nearly the same instant, he heard a voice he hadn't heard in a couple years and he was sure he'd never hear again.

"Kira!" It was Kira's best friend, Tolle. As he came into view, Kira's eyes went wide with shock. After all, the last memories he had of Tolle were him dying in battle to try and assist him in a fight. "So this is where you've been hanging out. Professor Kato's been trying to get a hold of you."

Upon actually getting a good look at his friend, Tolle frowned, "Uh, you okay, Kira? You look like you just saw a ghost."

Shaking his head as if to clear it, Kira responded, "It's nothing. Just remembering a nightmare I had recently. Must be all the news reports I listen to."

Miriallia more commonly called Miri and another of Kira's friends, who was standing beside Tolle, spoke up, "I don't blame you. Often times, we'll get news of the war several days after it's already happened. What about the news you're watching?"

"ZAFT forces taking Kaohsiung. Looks like it was from last week, which means that area may already be taken over by now." Kira said in reply, taking a line from how he remembered the original conversation going.

"Oh dear. Kaohsiung isn't all that far from us. Will the homeland be alright?!" Miri worried aloud.

Tolle tried to reassure both of his friends, "Hey, don't worry about it so much. ORB is a neutral nation. I don't see it turning into a warzone."

Despite the confident tone in his friend's voice, Kira knew that ORB will be attacked later in the war. He then shook those thoughts from his head.

If I've really gone back in time, then I'll do it better this time around. I'll protect the people I failed to before. He thought privately before diverting the current conversation. "So anyway, you guys were saying that Professor Kato wanted me for something?"

Kira's eyes went wide and his breath got faster and shorter as his teeth clenched in rage. It was him, he knew it! He could sense him! Rau Le Creuset, the madman responsible for escalating the war for the sole purpose of getting humanity to wipe itself off the face of the earth! The man who killed his lover, Flay Allster, just because he could. Except, that man wasn't in the superpowerful Mobile Suit that gave him such trouble during that final battle of the first Bloody Valentine War.

At this point in the loop, Kira had just equipped his Strike Gundam with its Launcher Striker pack for the first time. Said pack consisted

of some decidedly powerful weapons: a 320mm Hyper Impulse beam cannon on the left side of the suit to be fired underarm plus a 120mm anti-ship vulcan gun and two 350mm rpg Gun launchers mounted on the right shoulder. Now, the first time around, he had stayed on the ground, aimed the massive cannon and fired upon confirmed lockon. However, this only took out Rau's assault rifle and the arm that held it before blowing a hole in the colony wall.

This time around, however, Kira didn't exactly think about how his friends would react to what he did. Putting the Strike's thrusters to full, he leaped towards the offending Mobile Suit and the maniac inside. Rau Le Creuset noticed his approach and aimed his CGUE's rifle. Kira ignored the resulting spray of bullets as he knew that it was worthless against his Strike's Phase Shift armor. This surprised Rau as the rounds in his Mobile Suit's rifle were advanced armor penetrating shots. Realizing that his rifle was useless against this threat, he stored it on the CGUE's waist rack before pulling out the ZAFT standard heavy sword for close range combat.

Not that it mattered much. Kira's experience from both Bloody Valentine wars and Rau's mostly surprised state meant he was wide open for what the Ultimate Coordinator had in mind. The Strike Gundam kicked the outside part of the arm holding the sword as it was thrust forward, knocking the pilot off balance while also lining up for Kira's shot with the Hyper Impulse Cannon. Rau only had a moment to stare at his impending death before the particle beam penetrated his cockpit like it wasn't even there. Then the reality of what he just did came back to slap him as the beam traveled well beyond his intended target and into the colony wall behind the CGUE...just like the first time around.

At least, this time, he's not around to take advantage of the new "escape route" I made. Kira thought as he maneuvered the Strike and flared its thrusters to slow his descent and land without much impact.

-scene change-

"Captain Ades! I can confirm, Rau Le Creuset's CGUE has lost signal. I repeat, Rau Le Creuset's CGUE has lost signal!" Everyone aboard the Nazca Class Vesalius who heard the announcement stood around in shock. Rau le Creuset was an unquestioned Ace with a Mobile Suit and he lost to the Earth Alliance's new model and a Natural pilot. As the shock wore off, vengeance swiftly took its place.

"Attention all hands, this is Captain Ades. We have just lost Commander Creuset's signal. The fact that it was apparently a Natural piloting the one Earth Alliance machine we failed to acquire that did the deed has us worried. However, he would not have wanted us to mourn him. No, instead, we shall avenge him. We will take no chances and assault the new Alliance ship and its mobile suit with the full might of the Vesalius! All hands, prepare for combat!"

-scene change-

Kira could only fault himself for this drastic change from what he remembered of the first time around. Not only were the D-Type anti-fortress GINNs there, but the fully active brothers of his Strike, the Buster, Blitz, Duel and Aegis Gundams. As much as he liked how his experience of the first time around was helping him, he didn't quite see how it could get out of this situation. After all, they were mostly busy with loading supplies onto the Archangel battleship when the ZAFT forces struck...and Kira wasn't near the Strike at the time.

1.3

Kira was standing just outside the door to a room he had dreaded entering in all the time he's looped. It took about a dozen loops to build up the courage to reach this point. For all he knew about his status as the Ultimate Coordinator from his confrontations with the nihilistic madman, Rau Le Creuset, he wasn't quite sure how he'd react to hearing the whole thing from the people who he used to think were his parents. Taking a deep breath, he slowly opened the door and entered.

His heart pained a bit to see them, the sadness on their faces as they looked at him and how their body movement suggested that they were almost hoping that he didn't try to dig up the past that they thought had been buried. In response to their stares, Kira gave an awkward little grin before walking over to the couch opposite his parents. As neither side wanted to make the first move, Kira let the silence drag on for a few moments as he tried pushing through the emotion he had been bottling up ever since the first time through his timeline.

"Mom...Dad...Why...Why was I made into a Coordinator?" He was partly expecting their reaction, but the sheer regret on their faces spoke volumes. After they took a moment to recompose themselves, his mom reached into her purse and pulled out a framed picture of a lovely woman and two babies resting in her arms, one blonde the other brunette.

"Kira, I'm sorry. We should have told you before, but we kept putting it off, thinking you weren't old enough." His dad said as Kira was given the picture to study. "I mean, the story involved deals with subject matter that would most likely shock and disturb anyone. If you really think you can handle the truth, then I can see no reason why you should be denied."

He sighed with a heavy heart before continuing, "There was a man named Ulen Hibiki. Because of imperfections in the Coordination process, many times parents who paid for the treatment wouldn't entirely receive the baby they wanted. So, doctor Hibiki set out to discover a way to perfect the process. The conclusion he came to was that the mother's womb had to be eliminated from the equation, there were too many variables involved for growing such a baby. So, he and his team set out to make an artificial womb for growing Coordinator babies."

At this point, his mother stepped up to continue the story, "That man wasn't satisfied with just making a process that would allow for more consistent application of the Coordinator process. He wanted to show what his invention was truly capable of. In the end, after

several failed attempts, he finally succeeded by putting his own unborn son through the process involving his despicable machine. He successfully turned his son into the Ultimate Coordinator. That picture there is of your birth mother, shortly after you were born. It wasn't long after this picture was taken that Blue Cosmos attacked."

Kira picked up the picture and looked it over, back to front. Upon looking at the back, he saw what was written there. His name and, as he expected from the first time around, Cagalli's name. Cagalli, the blonde baby in the picture and his twin sister. When they noticed that he was staring at the names on the back, they looked ready for him to ask about that. However, Kira decided that he'd just play that off and make light of it.

"Cagalli, huh? She's my sister? Heh, no wonder we argue so much. We certainly act like siblings do. At least, assuming the people telling me about their experiences with their brothers and/or sisters is actually fact, rather than hyperbole." He started laughing at that. His parents giggled awkwardly at how well he was taking both parts of that secret. Seeing how his attempt wasn't really working, he changed tracks.

"It doesn't matter what my origin is. You raised me and for that, you will always be my Mom and Dad." With tears in her eyes, his mom embraced him, with his dad not far behind. He hugged them back and just let his own tears flow. As the small family hugged, Kira could only think, I should have done this earlier. It wasn't just me who needed to do this.

1.4

Well, this is new. Kira thought as he wasn't in any location he recognized from Earth or the colonies, PLANTs included. Also new, he had a tail, long brown monkey tail. That, and he was naked. He shivered a bit in the mostly dark and dank cave surrounding him. Looking behind him, he saw an incubation-type glass chamber. It was at that moment that memories that were technically his caught up with him.

He was an alien called a Saiyan, but not a naturally born one. Instead, Dr. Gero had stolen the DNA of all the Saiyans who had interacted with Goku and friends. From there, he set to work studying it so he could make an artificially enhanced one in his goal to kill Goku. Dr. Gero had been killed by the androids 17 and 18 shortly after making the final modifications to his development. Now, there was only to wait for the computer watching over him to decide he had been aged enough to let him loose on the world.

Kira actually found it rather easy to shrug off the programming Dr. Gero left in him to seek out and kill Goku. Other than that little change, the thing he found most notable was this feeling of overwhelming power in his veins. He compared it to liquid fire, but there was no pain, only power. As if on in instinct, Kira Yamato snapped around and unleashed a torrent of that energy into his former cradle, blowing it to atoms and leaving a hole in the mountainside. After that, all he could do was look at his hand and think, This is going to take some getting used to.

In a completely different timezone, Goku felt the surge of power that had been unleashed in the faraway mountain range. He immediately knew that this was a fused loop and that it was a looper he wasn't familiar with. His tail swished about, he had learned how to regrow it at will during one of his earlier loops, as he sent telepathic messages to everyone he knew was looping, telling them he'd deal with the fused looper. With his vastly increased power set, being able to use Instant Transmission without any concentration was as easy as breathing.

He arrived to find a naked brown haired young man with a Saiyan tail, facing a hole in the wall that led several meters into the outside. An instant later, the young man snapped around to gaze surprised at how he appeared out of thin air.

"Hi, you're the new guy, right?" Goku said with a wave hello.

Kira blinked at that while nervously scratching his cheek, "New guy? I don't know. Where am I?"

"I take it that this is your first fused loop?" Goku asked amiably.

"Fused...loop?" The Coordinator Saiyan repeated in a confused tone.

"Whoo boy, I don't want to do that whole song and dance." The much older looper said as he shook his head. Focusing his gaze on the younger saiyan, he reached a hand out and said, "Come on. I'll take you to a friend of mine. You'll get answers...and some clothes too."

As if to emphasize his point, Kira sneezed due to the continued exposure to the elements, made worse by the hole he had blown into the mountain. Not knowing what else to do, Kira took Goku's hand. An instant later, they both vanished.

After Kira received some clothes and his "Welcome to the Multiverse" introduction, he was sitting in Bulma's lab with said scientist, her old friend Goku, her husband Vegeta and her future son, Trunks. They listened to the story of his baseline, a world torn by two wars between ZAFT, a military consisting entirely of Coordinators-genetically enhanced humans like himself-, and the Earth Alliance, which the major part-the Atlantic Federation- was controlled by Blue Cosmos, an anti-Coordinator hate group. Kira told them how he was a war veteran more than a dozen times over, per war. Bulma was fascinated by his descriptions of the Mobile Suits used to fight with, while Vegeta scoffed that they had to fight with ridiculous machines.

"Well, that's it for my story. Now what?"

"Normally, in our baseline, there's this bio-android named Cell that would be appearing around this time, but he hasn't shown up yet. In fact, it's rather suspicious that you've turned up right now, especially as one of the great Saiyan race...what did you say your name was?" Both Goku and Bulma started teasing Vegeta about getting senile if he couldn't remember a name so soon after hearing it. The older Saiyan snapped at them to shut up.

"Kira Yamato," the young Saiyan replied, not really wanting to offend the older man by joining in.

"That's not a Saiyan name. A pure-blooded Saiyan requires a proper Saiyan name!" Kira could only look over in confusion at the other people in the room that weren't Vegeta. They just shook their heads at his antics.

"Tamato. Your name is now Tamato." The Saiyan Prince decided after about a minute of silence.

"Th-thank you," Was all the newly christened Saiyan could say as everyone else in the room faceplanted.

"And now, your training begins!" Vegeta stated with authority.

"Training?" Tamato could only blink in confusion. Then Vegeta grabbed his arm and started dragging him off.

"Trunks, come along. We have to break in the new guy."

"Yes, dad!" Said the other young saiyan in the room as he stood up ramrod straight before following after. Goku decided to make sure Vegeta didn't go overboard while Bulma just shrugged at her husband's decision.

"Hopefully, we won't need the Dragon Balls, like last time."

Kira, excuse me Tamato, was definitely getting the workout of his life. He was currently sparring with Vegeta at 100x Earth's gravity...as a warmup, the Prince said. Since most of his hand to hand combat training was either in low to normal gravity conditions, this was very taxing on the young Saiyan. Still, he was quite surprised by his new body's quick adaptability. They had only been training for about an hour and already, Tamato could feel himself adjust to the very heavy gravity. This allowed him to actually get a hit in on the Saiyan prince.

"Lucky shot, Tamato. I underestimated how quickly you would adapt to this level of gravity, since it took my half-blood son over there twice as long. We'll spar for a bit longer under this level before ramping it up." Vegeta charged his fellow looper with intent to harm only to find himself thrown to the ground as Tamato dodged his punch enough to grapple the stretched appendage.

"Before learning other hand to hand combat skills out of boredom, my knowledge of self defense mainly consisted of grapples and throws. I was rather pacifistic like that. Once I was swept up in the wars, I had to kill in desperate need to protect the people I cared about. However, after enough loops, boredom set in and I figured, 'When in Rome'."

"Do as the Romans do, huh? Well, since I see you're pretty good at defensive combat, show me what you can do on the offensive. Just be aware that I'll be punishing any opening I find in your style." Vegeta responded as he adjusted his own stance. Tamato took a boxing stance before lunging in for a straight punch. The Saiyan prince dodged it easily before bringing his own fist down on his sparring partner's back...which was countered as the younger Saiyan rolled in midair to block the blow with a kick before momentum pulled him out of normal attack range.

"I had gotten very good at reading my opponents back in my home loop, thanks to having an enhanced mind allowing me better memory and faster processing speed. My body would then react faster to that reading as my body was made to be better than an even another enhanced person like me."

"You really like to explain things, don't you? You've been without a looping partner for too long, I say. Alright then. Time for me to stop holding back so much. Let's see how well you can take blows that you can't avoid." Vegeta vanished from the visible light spectrum, causing Tamato's eyes to widen in surprise. However, despite his speed increase, the Saiyan Coordinator was able to avoid the punch that was thrown his way by bending backwards.

With that, the sparring escalated as the younger Saiyan sped up himself to keep pace with his instructor. However, as much as his new body was enhanced by Dr. Gero to defeat Goku, said enhancements didn't take into account the time loops. Thus, he could see that, for all he was able to match speed and strength with Vegeta now, each second he did so meant the Prince of all Saiyans just increased the pace. Eventually, Tamato wasn't able to get his guard in place fast enough and took a hard punch to the right shoulder. This sent him spinning for a moment before he recovered his balance.

It hurt, more than Tamato had expected, but then he was used to being fast enough to dodge attacks in his home loop. He hadn't put nearly as much emphasis on taking and shrugging off hits. After rolling his shoulder to make sure it wasn't injured, the looper started laughing. Vegeta paused to watch, wondering why he was so happy. The younger Saiyan answered that after a moment.

"I had been missing this in my loops. All alone with no one else my equal, I was getting bored and possibly losing some sanity as well. Now, however, I'm being challenged again and it feels great!"

"Of course. The great Saiyan race thrives on pushing their limits to ever increasing heights. The thrill of battle sings in our blood, Tamato. Listen to it, embrace it! Strike fear into the hearts of your enemies with your newfound power! HAHAHAHAHA!" Vegeta certainly seemed to be happy with this.

"Boy, Vegeta's really hamming it up. Did Bulma get him drunk before he came here?" Goku commented from the sidelines.

"I think he's just happy that there's finally been a looper who became a Saiyan for the fused loop." Trunks returned with a shrug.

After a few more minutes of that level of gravity, Vegeta increased it to 150x. This time, however, he didn't start easy on the lad to allow him time to adjust. Instead, he wanted to push Tamato to his limits. Even as the younger Saiyan's body got used to the new intensity, he

kept finding himself too slow to counter the much more experienced fighter's blows. Heck, even as his speed kept improving as his body adjusted, Vegeta increased his own speed to remain ahead of Tamato's reaction time. That wasn't to say that the younger Saiyan was only on the defensive during this time. He tried to sneak in blows wherever he thought he saw an opening for them, even if it didn't amount to much against the superior speed and skill of his opponent.

It still occasionally caused Vegeta to break off whatever attack run he was on before renewing it from a different angle. After awhile of this, however, Goku stepped in and call for a break. Tamato said his thanks inbetween gasps from his spot of the floor after falling over in exhaustion. Trunks set the gravity machine to a far lower setting before pulling out some capsules which exploded into refrigerators with food inside them. While Tamato usually avoided eating too much in his home loop, with all the food in front of him, he couldn't seem to help himself as he matched pace with the other Saiyans beside him.

"So, are you enjoying the fused loop so far?" Trunks asked conversationally.

"It's great. I've never felt so alive." He definitely wasn't anything like this in his home loop. Perhaps he was really being affected by the Saiyan blood that currently flowed in his veins.

"That's good, because we'll take a break from mere physical combat so we can focus a bit on training up your Ki usage." Vegeta said as he slightly paused his own meal to speak. "As a Saiyan, you'll understand how to use that energy you feel inside your body instinctively. But even then, it becomes far more potent once you've trained yourself to use it on more than an instinctive level. There are many applications for using that energy inside you, for instance, you've been using it unconsciously to increase how much punishment your body could take during our sparring match earlier. It can used offensively as a weapon and it has some utility in making things like barriers or achieving flight."

That caused Tamato to go wide in the eyes, "Flight?! I'll be able to fly under my own power?! That is awesome!"

"Indeed. Learning to use that energy to fly is considered a rite of passage for any young Saiyan. It's an essential part of learning more advanced forms of Ki projection." Vegeta seemed to be in a "professor mode" as he lectured the young looper.

"Not really essential, Vegeta. I actually learned to use Ki for offensive attacks long before I had learned to fly under my own power." Goku offered in rebuttal as he brought up a slice of steak to his mouth and ate it. The Prince of all Saiyans blinked before looking down at his own food, and finding some steak missing.

"KAKAROT, THAT WAS MY STEAK! I WAS SAVING THAT FOR LATER!"

"Then you shouldn't have been so distracted on lecturing our young friend here." Goku retorted while sticking his tongue out at his rival. Said rival didn't take kindly to that as he reached over and snatched up a large rice ball from Goku's side. When it was devoured before he could act, the orange gi wearing Saiyan got angry.

"HEY! THAT WAS MY RICE BALL! VEGETA, I WILL CRUSH YOU IF YOU TOUCH MY FOOD AGAIN!" Trunks could only sigh at the antics of their rivalry got into motion. Both older Saiyans stood up and started flaring their power as they broke into an argument. Neither Trunks nor Tamato felt like interrupting, especially since they had their own meals to finish. The argument really started escalating as the two survivors of the Saiyan race turned Super Saiyan in their increasing tempers.

The newest Saiyan stared at such a development in fascination, since that part of being a Saiyan hadn't been mentioned yet. The more he learned about what a Saiyan was, the more he seemed to realize that he had a long way to go before he could even understand it. Even with his interest on them, Tamato kept eating, since he didn't want anyone to decide his food was fair game if he

stopped eating for any length of time. Their argument lasted more than long enough that the two youngest Saiyans there finished their own food.

The food that started the argument seemed all but forgotten as Vegeta and Kakarot's argument went on and on.

1.5

"NEVER GONNA GIVE YOU UP! NEVER GONNA LET YOU DOWN! NEVER GONNA RUN AROUND AND DESERT YOU!"

"MAKE IT STOP!" "MAKE IT STOP!" "MAKE IT STOP!" "MAKE IT STOP!" Cried out four voices simultaneously.

"Note to self. Replacing G.U.N.D.A.M. OS with Rick Roll is highly effective."

1.6

"KIRA! WHY THE HELL DID YOU CHALLENGE ENSIGN NEUMMAN TO A DRINKING CONTEST, THEN TRIPLE DOG DARE HIM TO PILOT THE ARCHANGEL?!"

"Seemed like a good idea at the time."

1.7

"This is mankind's dream, mankind's desire, mankind's destiny!"

"Nyan, nyan, nyan, nyan, nyan!"

"What is that dreadful noise? Stop it. Stop it at once! NNNNNNNNNNOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!"

"Whoa, kid. That was pretty evil right there." Kira's mentor Mu La Flaga said as the omnicidal maniac that had manipulated both sides of the war fell catatonic from Nyancat.

"All's fair in love and war." The Ultimate Coordinator responded.

1.8a

The violet eyes of the Ultimate Coordinator fluttered open as the sensation of movement roused him from sleep. He found himself on a train, which definitely meant he wasn't back in his own world after his time spent as a Saiyan in the Dragon Ball loop. There hadn't been trains in his world for centuries. He also found himself wearing a simple black robe and holding a straight wooden rod in his hand. As he stared at the long stick in his hand, the memories of his loop self filtered in.

He was on the Hogwarts Express, having been chosen to attend the School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. The wand in his hand was thirteen inch blackthorn with a phoenix feather core. Going over his childhood, apparently he was the result of an attempt to apply enhancing spells on him while still in the womb. The end result, his wild magic phase was longer than normal and the effects of which were much more pronounced. As these memories passed, Kira compared the origin with the Dragon Ball loop and his own loop and sighed.

"Is this going to be a running gag in these loops? That I'm going to have some form of artificial enhancement that makes me not normal compared to everyone else? I never asked to be the Ultimate Coordinator." At that moment, the door to his cabin opened and in came Harry.

"Hello there. First time in a Hogwarts loop? I'm Harry Potter. What's your name?" The lightning bolt marked boy reached his hand down for a handshake. Kira grabbed the offered hand and shook.

"Kira Yamato. Goku and Bulma mentioned you."

"Oh, had a Dragon Ball fused loop before this? Well, at least that means I don't have to give you the introductions. I've had to give plenty of those in all my time looping."

"I'll bet. So, how about we swap stories? Might as well get to know each other, right?"

"And that's how I saved my mentor and love interest with Nyancat." Kira stated with a laugh and some pride.

"You'd be a devastating opponent, Kira. And that is what you did with your normal tech. Just imagine what you could do with other powers," said Harry approvingly. They had actually left the Hogwarts Express a bit ago and Kira ended up finishing his story in the thestral drawn carriage on the way up to the castle proper.

"Yeah, I already got a taste of that with Goku and friends. I mean, seriously, they have the power to blow up planets casually. Its a wonder they're able to keep from destroying Earth even in serious fights."

"it helps that they actively make their energy attacks non-penetrating so you'll have an explosion and some craters but that's it. While you can find some potent stuff in this world, it'll be nothing remotely close in terms of raw power."

Kira shrugged, "well, I always try to be very careful with any power I have. Two of my three main Mobile Suits are designed specifically for taking out enemies in droves. If I didn't avoid killing whenever possible, my body count would already be in the billions."

Harry nodded at that. It made sense, picking a generally pacifistic person for an Anchor. Means they have a higher likelyhood of making it through war situations with their sanity intact. They sat there in silence for a minute or so, Kira because he didn't have much more to say after that and Harry because he was thinking of something to say.

"So, how much of your school books have you read?" Might as well get back to that subject now. They were about to enter the school, after all.

"Memorized them," was the quick reply Kira gave.

"Read them that many times already?"

"Didn't need to do it too many times. I can process information far faster than a normal person and have increased memory capacity...Just saying that makes me wonder if I could live as a normal person."

"I see. And, you said that both this and the Dragon Ball fused loops have involved you still getting enhanced somehow. Not sure what to say about that." Harry said with a shrug. Genetically enhanced humans weren't his forte.

"Yamato, Kira." Here it was, the moment of truth for any Hogwarts student, the Sorting Ceremony. The looping war veteran slowly walked up to the stool and let the hat be dropped onto his head.

Well, well. What do we have here? A reluctant warrior you are. Intelliigent with a desire to protect others, even at great personal expense. A kind soul who can fight with great furiosity when pushed. Fit for any house, save Slytherin...You are a tough one.

If you don't mind, Mr. Sorting Hat. I would like to be in the same house as Harry Potter.

Very well, Mr. Kira Yamato. Then your house shall be
..."GRYFFINDOR!"

With the hat removed from his head, the young wizard went down to sit by the other Anchor. Said Anchor was busy chatting up his other looping friends while waiting for the Sorting Ceremony finished, since they've been through this part so so so many times. After Kira was only Blaise Zabini, who went to Slytherin. With all the sorting done, Dumbledore stood and made his normal Year one announcements before allowing the meal to start.

Since it was a buffet style affair, Kira piled his plate with at least one of everything in his reach. When he started scarfing it all down like he hadn't eaten in days, the people in his vicinity stared at how much he was eating. Harry smirked at the sight, very familiar with Goku's eating habits.

"Feeling ravenous, Kira?" He asked teasingly.

"Yeah. It's like..." He toke a moment to choke down a pumpkin pasty, "my appetite from the last loop carried over."

"It most likely has, on top of the growing body you have now. It takes some getting used to." Harry wasn't particularly concerned with being overheard in this cacophony. He'd know if someone was attempting to listen in from afar, after all. Anyway, he had his own meal to get back to.

"*Burp*Oh man. I feel stuffed." The young man said as he flopped down onto his designated bed.

"Not surprising. You ate more than me, Ron and Hermione put together. You really did bring over that Saiyan appetite." Harry was rather thankful that no one else had entered the bedroom at the moment. It allowed them to talk in relative privacy.

"So, what's the agenda for this year?" Kira asked while staring up at the ceiling.

"It's a bit of a slow year, strictly following the baseline. I'll join the Quiddich team, help Hagrid with Norberta."

"Who's Norberta?" Kira interrupted in confusion.

"A dragon. Specifically a Norwegian Ridgeback. Hagrid has a habit of keeping creatures others would want to avoid for safety reasons." Harry was rather casual about that.

"And this is a slow year?" Kira asked in surprise.

"Well, it is only my first year. It gets even more hectic in later years, not assuming I do something about the problems before they're a problem."

"Yeah, I've done some preemptive problem solving when I felt like I didn't want to deal with the resulting headache down the road. It was mostly just finding ways to sabotage certain Mobile Suits before they could deploy."

"Well, I'm going to bed. Good night." Harry said as he slipped under the covers.

"Good night." Kira replid as he did the same.

1.8b

"Almost as good as Harry did the first time on a broom. Perhaps you should join the Quiddich team as well." Ron said as Kira was busy testing the movement of the class borrowed Shooting Star. Said wizard had picked the two newest school brooms of the lot, since they lost power as they aged. He could have pulled out his own brooms for flying, but they didn't want to attract unwanted attention. They were trying to do a baseline loop for Kira, which is why Harry wasn't there to talk to.

"I wasn't one for sports growing up. Coordinators doing anything to stand out would usually mean Blue Cosmos came knocking. It wasn't nearly so bad in the ORB homeland and its colonies, but that group lurked almost everywhere." Kira was thankful they were up high enough and moving fast enough that most of the other students weren't able to hear them. Heck, almost all of the other students hadn't gotten their brooms off the ground.

"Understandable, but how are you flying so well? You're compensating for the broom's own shortcomings like you were born on one." Ron complimented.

"Flying is something I do a lot of in my home loop. Heck, in the previous loop I had where I was with Goku and his friends, I learned to fly under my own power. I guess I'm just good at it." Kira said with a shrug.

Ron stared at him for a few silent moments before asking, "Are you sure it's not your Coordinator baseline that makes you such a quick learner?"

Kira gave him a sour look, apparently that kind of question came up a lot with him, "Coordinators aren't some kind of perfect supermen. All being a Coordinator means is you have a lot of potential that is easier to bring out than a Natural. We still have to train to get it."

"Whoa, sorry about that, mate. I didn't mean to bring up anything offensive." Ron took his hands off his broom to wave them like he was warding himself. It really showed his looping earned skill that he maintained that cruddy old broom with just his legs.

Taking a deep breath to shake off the annoyance he felt, Kira apologized himself, "No, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have gotten terse with you."

"Hey, it's no big deal right? I mean, these loops can do stuff to people. I mean, there's Sakura Haruno, which lead to the diagnosis of Sakura Syndrome."

"Isn't she recovering from that, though?"

"Well, yes. But I was just using her as the most well known example. If there isn't someone who you can talk to about the loops, then it becomes very hard to maintain your sanity. Hopefully, you'll get a My Little Pony loop soon. That's a sanctuary loop and a great way to wipe the worries away."

"Ponies?" Kira was confused by that, but then shrugged it off. It's a wide multiverse out there, after all.

"Hey, Kira. You've been making use of your subspace pocket, right?" Harry asked conversationally as they were doing homework in the Library.

"I wish I had known about that before the fused loops. I would have been able to play around a bit more with my home loop. Man, thinking about it, I miss Birdy." Kira responded as he took a short break from the papers in front of him.

"Birdy? Who's that?"

"It's this robotic bird my friend Athrun Zala made for me when we were kids. That's what he loves to do, make machine companions for the people he cares about. Heck, when they were fiances, he made like half a dozen Haroes for the girl who eventually became mine, Lacus Clyne."

"Haroes? You mean those cute little ball robots? He makes them in your world?"

"Er, yeah. I take it that they aren't unique to my loop."

"Well, not entirely. Yours isn't the first looping world with Gundams in it, but it is the second one I've heard of that has Haroes."

"Huh. I'll be on the lookout for such a loop, then. Anyway, you were asking about my subspace pocket?"

"Oh yeah. I wanted to know what you've acquired so far."

"Not much, since I only discovered it and thus use it during the previous loop. Bulma and Goku gave me a complete set of Dragon Balls and pretty much a lifetime supply of capsules. Apparently I've got some room in there from how Bulma explained it." Kira said with a shrug.

"I'm sure. Still, you've got a long way to go before you could compare to me and the rest of the Original Seven. We're the first anchors in

these loops and are pretty much gods by now, with our subspace being universes unto themselves. Only reason we haven't ascended to Adminhood is because we like our loops. After all, the anchor disappears or goes nutty and the loops they anchor go boom, pretty much for good."

"Oh, that's not good. I'll have to be careful."

"Sorry, sorry. Didn't mean to make you fret. Just pointing it out."

"It's alright. Still, I know exactly what I'll be putting into my subspace once I get back into my normal loop."

"How about from this loop? What have you been putting in from here?" Harry asked curiously.

"Mostly stuff that I thought I could feasibly take without people wondering where they went." Kira replied.

The older looper grinned mischievously, "Then we'll have to do something about that. When taking something from a loop to put into your subspace pocket, it's all about the timing. While we couldn't do something like, say, clean the Library of every book inside right now, near the end of this loop there'll be a big battle for Hogwarts and taking the books then would be fair game. Especially if it's made to look like it had taken a powerful explosive spell or two."

"That sounds rather...questionable."

"It probably is, but pretty much every looper who has come through here and many who live here have done it at least once. Well, not that we really need to since any looper has all the time they'd need to memorize every last book in here." Harry stated with a shrug.

"Something to keep open for consideration, I guess. I mean, it's mostly what can happen to a looper if they stop caring about life that's the problem, right?" He seemed undecided about thieving material away...then the thought of what he was planning for his

home loop came up again and realized it wasn't that much different than some stuff he had already done at home.

"Well, until such time, what can I start taking now?"

Harry grinned again, "First things first, what you own and can buy."

1.8c

"That's checkmate, Ron." Kira said as his rook slid up next to Ron's king and into the protection of a nearby knight as a bishop blocked the King's escape route.

"You're getting better. That makes our tally 14-13-28 in your favor." The Chess King of Gryffindor conceded graciously.

"It's tough to admit, but you're pretty difficult to match at this. Even with these loops allowing you to get insanely skilled, you're a normal person."

"Don't let his averageness fool you, Kira. Ron here has surprising talent when he puts his mind to something." Harry said as he approached from his bedroom.

"Gee, thanks mate." Ron sarcastically replied, even though he knew it to be a compliment.

"Anyway, how's your wandwork been? Having any trouble with it, Kira?" Harry asked the young looper.

"It's been good enough to do my assignments with, but it feels like there's something untapped inside it and I don't know how to get it."

"It's nothing to be worried about. Your wand is blackthorn, which requires overcoming danger or hardship to truly bond with the wizard. At least, that's what my experience with wandlore tells me."

"Well that's just great. How am I supposed to fulfill that condition?" Kira asked, rather irritated.

"The troll," Ron spoke up. "During the Halloween feast, Professor Quirrell will release a mountain troll into the castle. The first time around, Harry and I were the ones who took it down, mostly by luck admittedly. Still, that seems like the closest thing to meet that requirement."

"So, in a couple of weeks then? I guess I can wait that long...Speaking of wands. Do you guys get new ones every now and then?" The younger looper asked.

"I think Ron and Harry had decided at some point to have a full collection of wands that accept them as their wizard." That voice was Hermione entering the dorm. "Ron's been having trouble getting veela hair wands to accept him, while Harry's missing only an obscure wood or two."

Harry shrugged, "I can make them, being a licensed wandmaker, but that doesn't mean they'll accept me as their wizard. Still, it's been fun, especially when I decide to go to a different wizarding school."

"That sounds fun for a later loop," commented Kira.

"Still, if you're going to take on a troll as a first year, we should make sure your wandwork is up to the task."

1.8d

Okay, this is tougher than I thought it would be. Kira thought as he repeatedly dodged the heavy swings of the mountain troll in the girl's loo. He had cringed when he saw where he had to fight. Thankfully, it was wide enough that the young looper had the space to maneuver around while Hermione watched in reserve. That wasn't the problem.

There seems to be a standard rule for magical creatures. The more dangerous they are, the more resistant they are to spells. Of course, or otherwise trolls couldn't be nearly the threat their rating suggested. Many of Kira's jinxes and charms merely bounce off its

skin: the stunning charm, the tickling charm, the impediment jinx, the jelly-legs curse and the leg-locker curse to name a few.

"Kira, you have to go on the offensive here. Disabling may be your favored method, but that doesn't always work." Hermione said as she was getting tired of him dodging only to launch an ineffective spell during an opening.

"I know, I know. Just seemed mean to use anything else on a dumb creature like this. Incendio!" Kira's blackthorn wand blasted out a bright orange flame that struck the troll on the arm holding its club. This caused it to drop the weapon and back away in pain.

"Avis! Oppugno!" A flock of sparrows erupted out of Kira's wand with the bang and smoke of a gunshot. Then, they set upon the larger creature without hesitation, rapidly swooping in to peck at its exposed flesh.

"Lumos Solem!" The wand blasted forth an incredible cone of bright light, blinding the troll and causing it to fall back further.

"Confringo!" Another blast of fire, but instead of merely scorching the arm, it struck the troll head-on and exploded with intense heat. With a loud bellow, the troll fell backwards and passed out. Kira blinked at the incredible power that last spell produced. When he was practicing that spell with Harry, it exploded with only half as much strength.

The teachers arrived shortly thereafter, Hermione explaining an edited version of the event that just happened involving her getting caught by that thing on her way out of the loo and Kira rushing in to save her. Professor Mcgonagall checked the two over while the others checked on the troll, which was still breathing. Kira was actually rather surprised that it had survived being hit directly by that spell. After she decided that they weren't too badly hurt, the Head of Gryffindor House lead her charges back to the dormitory.

"I was quite surprised myself. The power increase was significant." Hermione reported to her fellow loopers. They were all in the dorm commons as everyone else was swarming the young looper and asking about the rumors of him taking the troll down single-handed.

"Then, we'll count the mission as a success. Another looper well on his way." Harry said with a proud smile. The crowd surrounding Kira started to thin as time drew towards bedtime. Said looper sagged where he was standing from both the fight and the energetic students wanting to know about what happened. When he made his way over to where Harry, Ron and Hermione were and flopped into an empty chair. "So, Kira. How's the wand feeling now?"

"It's definitely feeling more responsive. Like it was unsure of me before, but now it's like the wand is an extension of my own arm."

"That's exactly as it should be. Wand and wizard as one." Harry stated with satisfaction.

After taking a deep breath, Kira asked, "so, what's next on the loop timeline?"

1.8e

Kira's eyes widened in utter disbelief. Based on his loop memories, he shouldn't have such a huge pile of gifts. It was Christmas day and apparently, every looper currently awake had gotten him a ton of gifts. He wasn't quite sure how the looping students managed to go out and get them, but figured they had proxies do it. As for the actual gifts, Kira had received: a full set of all broomsticks up to the Nimbus 2000 from Ron, many books of spells that weren't taught at Hogwarts from Hermione, a remembrall and sneakoscope from Neville, an undetectable extension charmed satchel loaded with alchemy ingredients from Draco, the largest collection of sweets he had ever seen in his life from Dumbledore, a survival kit; including several different kinds of knives, hundreds of meters of cord, a large fishing pole, a longbow and arrows from Hagrid and more wizard fireworks than he knew what to do with from the Weasley twins.

"Strange, Harry didn't get me a gift?" Kira wondered confusedly.

"I did. I just had to wait to receive it." The older looper said as he handed a gift wrapped package to the younger looper.

"But this is one of yours," Kira replied as he spotted the tag to Harry.

"I already have dozen of what's in that package. So, for your first Hogwarts loop, you can have it." Now curious, the violet eyed young man ripped into the package. When the silvery cloth slid into his lap, he was very surprised.

"What is this?"

"It's an invisibility cloak. The best one in the world." Harry stated with pride. It was all Kira could do to hold the cloak up and inspect it. He was absolutely spellbound by the quality and implications of such a piece.

"Hey mate, you should put these away." Ron called from the pile of Kira's gifts to the distracted boy.

"Oh, sorry!" Kira said while jerking himself up to standing. A couple minutes later, the only sign of his gifts were the discarded wrappings.

Later that day, during the Christmas feast, Kira was having the time of his life. He loved the wizard crackers, as his growing collection of hats and prizes proved. Dozens of luminous balloon packs, half a dozen Wizard's Chess sets, even more sweets like chocolate frogs and sugar quills and a few grow-your-own-warts kits were among his pile of gifts. Among his hats were; three top hats, a bowler hat, a fedora, at least one each of the military caps and half a dozen pointed wizard hats. He couldn't put them away yet, since there were non-loopers present.

Even as he was acquiring his current hoard, Kira ate his fill of the feast. This time, however, he had competition in the Weasley twins, who bet some more of their Wizard Wheezes if he could at least

match how much they ate combined. To their credit, they were able to keep pace pretty evenly with the younger looper for several minutes, however, it eventually became clear that Kira had more eating stamina as the twins' pace started slowing down while he still went on strong. Probably him using the Saiyan body he got last loop, which wasn't against the rules of the contest. Eventually, having been given position of referee, Ron called for an end to the contest in Kira's favor.

They paid up, though the scowls on their faces meant they suspected his trick. He only smiled in response as he claimed his prize.

He paid for eating like that as he moaned on his bed. Harry and Ron both shook their heads.

"That's what you get for making such a bet with my brothers. Perhaps you should have kept using that Saiyan metabolism after finishing dinner."

"For all I know, they may have slipped some of their pranking junk in with my food once they started falling behind." Kira stated as he lay there. "If they gave me U-no-poo, I'll find a way to get back at them. The body digesting that much food and not being able to release it in a timely manner, not how I want to go."

"Please mate, don't talk about such things after a meal. It never tastes as good coming up as it does going down." Ron winced queasily at the thought of a catastrophic toilet emergency.

Harry listened to his friends talk. They'd be back in classes soon enough, not like they were the same about their homework as the first time around. Looking over at Kira, he thought about how quickly the younger looper was learning everything the Wizarding World had to offer. The thought of genetically enhanced humans crossed his mind, a rather dark subject due to its implications. It was apparently a common practice where he comes from. A shiver ran down the Boy-Who-Lived's spine as he compared the Coordinator process to

Sakura's antics while she was influenced by the syndrome named after her.

Having the ability to do so, does that make it right? Or is this a case of blue and orange morality, where the culture is so different that its sense of right and wrong are different regarding certain things? He didn't know, having no direct experience with that loop other than what he was told by Kira. This isn't even the first time he's contemplated about this. He was deeply familiar with all the other known loops currently going on, but there were very few that ever had genetic manipulation as a common thing that no one really thought much off. Just pay a fee and tell the doctor what you want and boom, custom child. Each time he thinks about it, the implications and comparisons to Sakura come up again and he shivers.

It seemed a very slippery slope, especially since Kira had told him that it wasn't just Coordinators that were made by this process. When Kira shivered at some recalled memories, Harry brought out a pensieve so he could see it first hand. He saw a man he considered more horrible than Voldemort. A nihilistic madman and omnicidal maniac who intentionally escalated the first war Kira fought in for the sole purpose of getting Humanity to wipe itself from existence in the resulting conflict. This man, Rau Le Creuset, was cunning and an incredible actor, being able to hide his insanity until he thought it no longer mattered, even acting like a compassionate leader to the men under his command. On top of all that, he was a clone.

A clone, because the man who wanted him made considered his own son inferior due to his mother's genes. Not even the only clone. From Kira's own experience over his loops, there were at least three clones of that man and several...Carbon humans. That term confused Harry when he first heard it. The younger looper then elaborated about them. They aren't clones as such, but instead created by implanting DNA and memories of other people into already living beings.

Not the first time Harry has thought about Kira's world and shivered at the darkness it bears.

1.9

It's almost kind of sad. Kira thought as he gleefully danced around his current foe. Yes, he was literally making his Mobile Suit dance around his opponent. Said opponent was too busy raging at how his antics were knocking him around while his friends could only stare and wonder if he had gone insane in the matter of minutes before he launched to fight. And that's not even including the music of choice...

"Hey, sexy ladies! Op, op, op...Oppa Gundam style!"

1.1) Basic opening here. Nothing all that special.

1.2) Kira is still a young looper here, so this falls under "Didn't Think This Through".

1.3) A little bit of closure can go a long way in healing.

1.4) Yes, I know tomatoes aren't really a vegetable...are you going to argue with Vegeta about it?

1.5) That's one way to disable both Mobile Suit and Pilot.

1.6) Because a heavily armed warship driven by a drunk is funny.

1.7) Omnicidal maniac made catatonic by a rainbow poptart space cat.

1.8) To be honest, I'm not sure what inspired this crossover.

1.9) Because confusion fu is the best kind of butt kicking.

Chapter 2

2.1a

Is this Hell? Is this punishment for what I did? Is this some kind of cosmic joke or is there actually a reasonable explanation for why I'm not dead and back on the Archangel. Those were the confused thoughts of one Ensign Natarle Badgiruel as she found herself sitting in the Captain's seat on the Archangel's bridge. She remembered this, when the man who was supposed to be in charge was killed because of the explosives placed by ZAFT. Along with the five young men who were to be the pilots of the newly developed G-weapons.

The Archangel had just punched its way out of where it had been trapped due to the explosives and the Strike had just chased of the ZAFT mobile suit with the Launcher Striker pack. Her eyes went wide as the memories kept trickling in.

Kira Yamato! …This is a punishment, isn't it. Having to face them and being the only one aware of how I betrayed them. I saw everything that Blue Cosmos bastard was doing, but I did nothing because of… loyalty? No, that's not it, I was loyal to my friends on the Archangel and look how that turned out. Duty then? Perhaps, because that… prat… was my superior officer. Is that why I hesitated for so long? Out of a sense of Duty?

Those Boosted Men, treated like equipment, and the nuclear missiles. The Neutron Jammer Canceler should have been put to immediate use restarting the power plants to end the energy crisis. Instead, he mass produced it to retrofit nuclear weapons and launch a full scale genocide on the PLANTs. Muruta Azreal, I'll never forgive you. Even if ending you will always lead to my death, I'll do it gladly.

"Ensign Badgiruel? Shouldn't we go meet the Strike? It's on its way," said one of the only personnel that hadn't been killed during ZAFT's attack.

"Er, yes. I'll get to that right away," Natarle replied, having been shaken out of her thoughts for the moment. As she walked away, the crew member watched her leave with a confused look on his face before he went back to work.

This same conversation, this same confrontation. This is where it truly began. He, a Coordinator who fought off the Coordinators of ZAFT, piloted the Strike. It was an emergency situation, so there's not much I could say about that. Yet, wasn't I relieved when he kept piloting it to protect the Archangel? Natarle thought privately as resident badass Ace, Mu La Flaga, asked Kira Yamato about his status as a Coordinator and the younger man confirming the suspicion. She winced as what remained of the security crew aimed their rifles at the violet eyed boy, which lead to his friends stepping in to shield him.

No, that can't be right. I'm an officer of the Atlantic Federation! I use my head, not my heart… but that's what got me killed, wasn't it? I didn't really see anyone on the Archangel as actual people, instead focusing almost entirely on rank. That's why I tried to have Kira officially enlisted, when he and his friends wanted nothing more than to get away from the war that had already cost them their home of Heliopolis.

"Ensign Badgiruel!" Again, her thought process was interrupted. Man, she was picking very bad times to pause and reflect. Oddly, Kira was looking at her funny, like he was seeing something out of place with her, but that wasn't possible.

"I was asking about who should be in charge from here," Mu La Flaga reiterated to the daydreaming young officer. "I'm a pilot, so that leaves me out by default."

"Lieutenant Ramius has seniority of the surviving crew. I leave command to her," was the Ensign's crisp response, leaving Murrue Ramius with a look that seemed to say, Don't I get a say in this? Taking a deep breath, Natarle continued, "My apologies for cutting

this conversation short, but we should land and load up as many supplies as we can get our hands on before they return. That would be my suggestion for what to do next. Now, if you'll excuse me, something's been bugging me and I need to relieve some stress because of it."

She snapped a salute and quickly walk out of the Mobile Suit hanger bay. Murrue just stood there, stunned.

"I've never seen her act like that before. Could the attack have really caused her that much stress?" No one had noticed Kira breaking off to give chase.

"Ensign!" The young Coordinator called out. Natarle was rather surprised that it was Kira of all people who followed her. She turned to face him as she paused in the middle of the corridor.

"Yes, K…young man?" She mentally slapped herself for the near slip-up. She was rather unprepared for what came next.

"You don't need to hide it with me, Natarle. This isn't your first time going through this day, is it?" There was a knowing look in his eye, like he knew the answer before the question was even asked.

Natarle blinked a few times as that sank in. Then, her expression said it all, she was caught completely flat-footed.

"How… Do you know what's going on?!" She wasn't trying to be loud, but she wasn't really in control of herself.

Then, based on her memories of the young man before her, he did something completely unexpected. He started laughing. Though, the main surprising part of it was the quality of it. It wasn't anything like what that prat Azreal did, instead being more a laughter of relief. When he managed to calm down, he directed her into a nearby room so they could talk privately.

Once they were alone and he was sure they weren't going to be disturbed, Kira started what was to come with a very happy…

"Welcome to the Multiverse!"

2.1b

Natarle didn't know what to say to the revelation Kira gave her. It left her utterly flabbergasted. Even more so once he started showing off some of the things in his subspace pocket. Still, it explains why he was so happy to discover that she was now in the same situation. It means he has company when he isn't with someone from a different loop.

"So, how long have you been… looping?" She asked hesitantly.

"I stopped counting when I figured that it was much like watching a clock tick away. It just makes it seem slower and more boring than it has to be. Not that boredom's really been an issue for me, but I have messed around and done things to liven up my time. Like this one time I snuck into the Gundams before ZAFT attacked and replaced their OS with an endlessly looping Rickroll."

Not really knowing what a Rickroll was, Natarle could only stand there looking confused. Seeing that, Kira pulled out an iPod and played the song. Even with just that partial listen, Natarle agreed that would be torture enough.

"So, we're basically stuck in endlessly repeating time until the computer that runs the multiverse is completely fixed eons from now? And until then, we have to deal with the unstable combination of becoming more powerful, more bored and less sane? …I need a stiff drink."

"How about we both get hammered after we have a few days where ZAFT won't be hounding us. Deal?"

Natarle stared at the younger man… well, younger-bodied man… and said, "You drink hard stuff now?"

"No, but I've been thinking of trying it," Kira shrugged.

"Let me tell you, depending on the drink, it's an acquired taste," Natarle stated in a matter of fact tone. "Also, how do you plan on getting some? Looper or not, legally and physically, you're sixteen."

"You could just get some for me."

"And how's that going to look to the crew when they see I got a minor drunk?"

"…You have a point there. I suppose I could wait until after this war, since it's only the Atlantic Federation that has the drinking age set to 21."

"Unless you enlist, in which case it doesn't matter," Natarle said.

"Wait, why the change for enlisted men?"

"Because someone eventually noticed that it was alright for eighteen year olds to sign up for the military, to fight and die for their country, but it wasn't alright for them to get drunk with their buddies on downtime. So, for military personnel, drinking age isn't a set rule, instead being left to the CO's discretion."

Kira paused as the implications set in. After that moment of silence, he stated, "Well, I had been planning on trying that eventually as well. Good a time as any. I mean, the Atlantic Federation isn't 100% Blue Cosmos, which is why I haven't tried enlisting before."

That stunned the female ensign. Has the young man she knew really changed so much? Still, knowing how much of a grip Blue Cosmos held over the Atlantic Federation part of the Earth Alliance, Natarle could agree with his choice to postpone enlisting with them on his loops. At this point, she needed something to take her mind off the

sheer paradigm shift she was going through. The rules and regulations she had stuck to for so long weren't going to mean anything with these time loops going on.

"You know what, sure," Natarle declared while mentally throwing her hands into the air. "I'll help you through the enlistment process and then we'll get smashed. I just hope it's not cheap beer that's brought aboard."

2.1c

"Damn it. Why's my subspace pocket so small?" Natarle complained after fitting a small number of different caliber handguns, rifles, shotguns, and explosive ordinance - grenades and RPGs - from the Archangel's armory inside. This was a few days after they went on a beer binge. The ship was currently to rendezvous with the orbiting 8th Fleet within the hour.

"It'll get bigger in time. From how the concept was explained to me, it gets bigger the more powerful you are. Before returning to these loops, I went to two other universes and gained a lot of power. Still, I need to set up a time where I can take the Strike and its Striker Packs. I have a lot of ideas that involve making my own collection of Mobile Suits and related accessories," Kira responded as he took just as many weapons as the second in command of the Archangel did. This was on top of a few vehicles that weren't going to be missed.

Natarle growled in annoyance and jealousy that he wasn't nearly as limited as she was. Still, she had a place to start and now she would no longer be unarmed in any situation. The thought of what she had planned for Mr. Blue Cosmos Leader would earn the approval of several prominent loopers. Taking a deep breath, the new looper turned to her companion.

"So, when I can manage it, what would you like me to get a hold of for you?" In response, Kira pulled out a data drive and handed it over to her.

"I won't have the complete list until near the end of the loop, but that's what I've managed to hack from the Earth Alliance database so far."

"Already? You certainly know your stuff if you can hack wirelessly from this distance to the 8th Fleet."

"Actually, I cheated a bit," Kira responded by pulling out his thirteen-inch blackthorn wand. "My friends from the previous loop taught me some spells that adds for some 'technomagic', as they called it. I connected directly to the database at JOSH-A to draw all possible plans related to the Strike and Archangel I could find. Turns out, there's plans to make space-use Skygraspers called Cosmograspers as support craft for the successors to the Strike."

"That should be well within my power. Still, this almost doesn't feel right that we're sneaking behind our own allies backs to do this," Natarle pointed out.

"It doesn't really sit too well with me either, but what can we do? No one else is looping and trying to explain the situation to anyone else may just have them lock us up."

"I know. Means I really wish they'd start doing that." The pair left the armory after that remark.

"Kira, what happened that caused us to come here for a loop?!"

"No idea. Still, when in Rome."

Natarle felt like she was swallowing something sour. Then she got her cue.

"The internet is really, really greeeeeeeat!" Then a tannish colored monster puppet popped out for a moment.

"For porn!"

2.3

"And I thought Lieutenant Ramius was big. Those girls weren't natural… I still have the back pain!" Natarle complained while drinking from the highest proof bottle of alcohol she could get her hands on. Kira was right beside her with an equally potent drink. The bartender just listened without comment.

"Now we know why everyone else hates the place. Permission to blow my brains out?"

"Denied. We might just get sent back there if you commit suicide. You're the Anchor, after all."

"Damn it. Avenue Q was better than that place and I never want to go back there either."

"When in Rome, huh?"

"Alright, alright… not like there was much we could do. Safe mode loops apparently mean we can't do jack for the loop."

"First time Eiken loops are always the worst," stated the opinion of a braided, black-haired man with a red coat. "Okay, they never get easier to deal with… and why the heck can I never find alcohol during those loops?!"

"Wait, you're Ranma Saotome, aren't you?" Kira said in surprise.

"And you're Kira Yamato," the now-identified O7 looper said with a toast of his own drink in acknowledgement.

"Nice to meet you."

"Likewise."

"…It's tough, isn't it?" Kira started. Ranma just looked at him, waiting for him to complete that thought. "I mean, these loops have this kind of hill feeling. The new loopers have to struggle to climb up to a point

where the continuous lives they've lived don't threaten their sanity anymore."

"Well, that's one way to look at it. The more cynical loopers I've met would just say they've accepted their insanity. It's all about finding those times that set your mind at ease, when it doesn't feel like you have an infinite weight bearing down on you. Speaking of, you looped into My Little Pony yet? It's a Sanctuary loop, so it's great for a looper's stress. Especially after an Eiken loop."

"Nope, not yet," Natarle replied for the both of them.

"Really? Shame. Hopefully it'll be soon."

"Hopefully," Kira said as he polished off his current drink. The bartender silently gave him a new one.

2.4

Kira felt shorter than usual. Either he had shrunk somewhat during this loop, or the trees he was seeing were bigger than the ones he was used to. Moving seemed to take a lot more effort as he got closer to examine them. Determining that they were normal trees and thus not any different from the species he was familiar with, he figured that his perspective had lowered. Not sure how yet, but it had.

Anyway, he continued to follow the trail through the trees he found himself on. At this point, he was getting curious why his loop memories hadn't kicked in yet. Well, apparently they didn't want to spoil the surprise. The moment he spotted a trio of ponies heading his way, the memories decided to flood his mind.

He was an experiment by a mad scientist unicorn who wanted to see if it was possible to make an alicorn without the assistance of the Elements or the Princesses, codename Dawning Horizon. Of course, it was a highly unethical practice so the unicorn was eventually discovered and stopped. However, as that mad scientist knew they

were coming, she had hidden her finalized product away before she was defeated. He had finished development shortly thereafter and been released. Now, he was awake and wandering around aimlessly.

The first reflective surface he came across, a pond, he paused and look at himself. He was the same shining white as the Strike with its Phase Shift armor active, with his brown hair as a mane and tail and his eyes their normal violet. A spiraling horn prominently sticking out of his mane and a pair of wings that seemed too small for regular flight between his mane and tail completed the look. The face staring back at him had a very confused and sad expression on it. He walked on shortly after.

Realizing that he was once again some kind of experiment for making a superior being, Kira did the first thing he thought of… He started cursing up a storm. The other ponies he saw stared at him for several moments. First was because of the cursing, but then they spotted that he had a unicorn horn and pegasus wings. He hadn't gotten a good look at them, but one of the ponies was a violet unicorn with a similarly colored mane and tail with some pink highlights.

Twilight Sparkle was there and could see what was going on. She calmly walked over to the still swearing alicorn.

"Excuse me, good sir. What seems to be the problem?"

Her words cut through his foul mood like a knife. Pausing in mid-word, Kira settled down to look at the mare.

"And that's the story. It seems every loop I don't take over someone else's spot, I'm thrown in as some kind of artificial being or are otherwise enhanced. Whether it makes sense or not. I know that's how it was in my baseline, but still, it grates after a while."

They were currently inside Twilight's tree house/library with the only other loopers currently awake, Princess Celestia and Cadance. The three native loopers looked at each other and knew what each other was thinking to help the poor guy.

"Vacation Loop!"

"Vacation loop?" Kira blinked.

"You've never let yourself have a vacation loop?" Celestia asked, somewhat surprised.

Kira shook his head, "Never even considered it. It'd have meant leaving my friends vulnerable."

"I see. You really care about your friends. But, couldn't you have just taken them with you on a vacation loop?"

"Nowhere that was really safe from being engulfed in the first war… Well, I suppose there's Mars, but it'd take too long to get there from where I start. I don't yet have the power to teleport my Mobile Suits that far, much less the Archangel itself. Besides, there's about two years between the wars… isn't that enough of a vacation?"

"Not for loopers like us. We're pretty much ageless, so a mere two years means nothing to us in the long run. The more you loop, the less effective that downtime will be unless you change things up more often," Twilight stated calmly.

The younger alicorn sighed. "Yeah, you're right. I wasn't letting myself think of that possibility, because otherwise what would that peaceful time with her serve?"

"Her?" Princess Cadance asked.

"My girlfriend, Lacus. We'd spend that time between the wars to take care of some war orphans. Then some special forces team would invade to try and kill Lacus, causing me to come out of retirement to

kick their ass and get back into the war… yeah, it typically gets rather messy. A vacation where I don't have to worry about that might be a good thing."

"No worries. This is Equestria, where we work hard to ensure is a Sanctuary Loop area," Cadance stated with pride.

2.5a

"You want the Blitz this time around?" Natarle asked in shocked confusion. The two of them were sitting down in a cafe. The time they had woken up put the ZAFT attack a few days from now. "Why?"

"Because it will prevent ZAFT from getting their hands on the Mirage Colloid stealth system. Don't you remember how they adapted it onto GENESIS?" Even after so many hundreds of years in the loops, Kira remained wary of the rampant use of Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Cosmic Era. While nuclear missiles were the Atlantic Federation's, and by extension Blue Cosmos', WMD of choice whenever N-jammers weren't an issue, GENESIS of ZAFT was in many ways worse than a Death Star. True, GENESIS couldn't blow up a planet in a single shot, but it's not like that mattered when the end result is just as bad. For GENESIS is a gigantic Gamma Ray laser, big enough to wipe out entire fleets of ships in an instant and not only blow a big chunk out of a planet, but kill everything else from the resulting radiation poisoning in the atmosphere.

This is compounded by the technology that ZAFT acquired when it stole the G-weapons. Most notably, the Blitz Gundam and its Mirage Colloid. Because of that stealth system, ZAFT's supreme commander was able to hide this weapon until he was ready to use it. It also had more than enough nuclear engines to power the Phase Shift armor it was given from researching the G-weapons. Because of that defense, not even a Positron Blaster Cannon was able to so much as scratch the paint job. The only reason it was stopped the first time was due to Kira's friend, Athrun Zala, self-destructing his

own nuclear engine equipped Gundam inside of the GENESIS superweapon.

"Yeah, I remember. But that means we'll have to avoid Artemis, since it was the Blitz that allowed ZAFT to get around the Lightwave Barrier that protected the fortress."

"Not really. I could just hack the system and bring the barrier down when the ZAFT ship gets close enough. They're so confident that their defense will keep out any enemy, they don't even suspect that a saboteur could sneak in to cause problems. After all, the only reason ZAFT hasn't actually bothered them is because of how low priority that region of space is. If it was a more important place, ZAFT would have captured it already."

"And then the Lightwave Barrier would be far more widespread as a fortress defense," Natarle thought out loud. "I do find it odd that Artemis was the only Earth Alliance fortress to employ the Lightwave Barrier during the first war, while derivatives for Mobile Suits were far more common during the second one."

During the baseline, Natarle died during the final battle that involved the GENESIS weapon, but has mostly avoided that fate whenever she's Awake before then. It said something about Muruta Azreal that no one ever stepped up to stop her whenever she throws him out the airlock. Well, that's actually a more recent thing when a fellow looper talked with her about doing that, as opposed to her previous method of using some of the weaponry she keeps stored in her subspace pocket to put some holes in his head. Now, she could get rid of a problem and not have to waste any ammo nor clean up a mess afterwards to do it.

"I know. Anyway, I'm not positive about it yet, but all that needs to happen for me to get a different Gundam is just have the one I want switch places with the Strike… Hopefully."

"Hopefully. Though it'll be a good way to try and lower their fighting strength. They'll have to try and make do with what they have to

make the Strike work for them, while we'll be sitting on the Striker Packs that make that Mobile Suit effective."

"Which will go right into my subspace pocket for use with my growing collection of Mobile Suits that can mount them. Speaking of Striker Packs, I do have a design in mind for a loop run where I don't use the Phase Shift armor to make the Strike's battery last as long as possible in a fight. It involves replacing the beam weapons on a Sword Striker Pack with solid ones. Only thing I can't figure out what to replace it with is the Midas Messer."

"The beam boomerang? Um, if you want some redundancy, you could probably fit another Armor Schneider or two into that space," Natarle offered.

Kira shook his head. "No, already considered that. It will have to be a distance weapon and Armor Schneiders aren't good for throwing. Not an additional CIWS either. It'd require too much modification to that part of the pack."

"Hmm, in terms of energy cost, a rocket pod or a small clump of missiles could work for longer ranges. You'd just need the initial charge to launch them. No need to make this complex."

"And be very careful they aren't hit… but you're right. Keep it simple. I'll keep the boomerang there, since anything I can think of to replace it won't take that much less energy to use and a lot more of a hassle to install something new."

"Right. So, anything else to discuss at this point in time?"

"Hmm… How about we go over the other factions we can join up with in a later loop?"

"Like the Junk Guild? Hmm, now that has some potential."

2.5b

Rau Le Creuset frowned. The white Legged Ship he saw inside the now destroyed space colony was sitting several hundreds of meters away from his, with no sign of being battle ready. It was too quiet. His Vesalius was a top of the line ZAFT ship, but something about that EA ship made him nervous. It was a familiar feeling, like what he had when the son of his genetic donor was nearby, but he couldn't tell where it was coming from nor why he felt insignificant before it.

A flash, like a surge of electricity, entered his mind and directed him to something more concrete than the previously vague feeling. Unfortunately, he realized that it was too late. The enemy he now sensed, different from that man Mu La Flaga, was now in a very dangerous position next to the Vesalius.

"Captain of the ZAFT forces ship." The black visage of the Blitz Gundam appeared as its Mirage Colloid cloak dropped, the beam rifle of its Trikeros offensive shield pointed right at the bridge. The Trikeros consisted of an anti-beam coated shield with a beam saber, beam rifle and three Lancer Darts - high explosive, rocket propelled spikes - integrated into the design. "You have ten seconds to respond before I destroy your ship."

A quick glance shared between Captain Ades and Commander Rau before they nodded to each other.

"This is Captain Ades, Pilot. What are your demands?"

"Quick on the uptake. You realized that if I had come here just to kill you, I'd have done it before you could even react. So, my demands are simple and non-negotiable. Return the Mobile Suits you stole plus give me your Mobile Suits and all related equipment and I'll let you go. You can even keep the data you obtained from the G-weapons you stole. However, if you refuse, then you and that data will go boom as well as the stolen Mobile Suits."

"Hmm. Will you allow us some time to deliberate?"

"Five minutes, no longer."

Once the line was cut, Rau spoke up. "Quite interesting that he'd allow us to keep the data if he wants them back so badly. And it would be a shame if we couldn't even give that to the Supreme Commander for the effort made to take them."

"Not that I actually believe he'll spare us if he gets what he wants. However, even if that is the case, we can set it up so that his 'spoils' are wasted. How quickly can we rig the Mobile Suits and equipment to self destruct after they've been released?"

"Just what I was thinking. It can be done as they're being released from the docks. If we set the timer right, we could even get the Legged Ship caught in the explosions while being well out of range of counterattack."

A nod was all that was needed by the Captain to show he agreed with the plan. He then signalled the com officer to reopen the channel.

"Alright, Pilot. You win. We will turn over the all the Mobile Suits and equipment to you in exchange for our safety."

"Smart man. Five minutes should be plenty of time to release the MS and equipment."

Only about three minutes later, Kira found himself surrounded by the four stolen G-weapons, a damaged CGUE and loads of spare ZAFT MS equipment and ammo. Knowing that they wouldn't have just turned them over without a fight, the first thing Kira did was apparate into each cockpit to shut the self-destruct down and turn the MS back off. Then, he pulled out his wand and cast a spell to keep the smaller stuff from drifting away. Once everything was secured to his satisfaction, he took hold of the CGUE and drag it to the Archangel once it was close enough while the white ship deployed its complement of Mistral worker pods to collect the rest.

"Captain Ramius, mission successful," Kira chirped into the Blitz's comm as he settled it back into its dock.

"I could tell. That was a rather reckless plan you managed to pull off. Even your friends didn't know you had it in you."

"Hehe," the young man chuckled, embarrassed. "Well, the Blitz seemed like it was a good Mobile Suit for such a plan and I would have pulled the trigger if it meant protecting my friends."

"But I'm most amazed that they didn't try anything when they handed everything over. We got lucky."

Kira knew it wasn't luck, but that was a secret he had to keep. "Indeed, we did. So, let's see what we have among the spoils."

"Well, so much for trying to follow the baseline with the Blitz instead of the Strike," Natarle Badgiruel stated with some lighthearted sarcasm. Then she toasted her looping companion with her beer can. "Still, you can't really argue with results, can you?"

Kira rubbed the back of his head with some embarrassment, "Yeah, it worked much better than I expected and I was just messing around with the capabilities of the Blitz. I mean, they only tried to use the self-destruct mechanism of the Mobile Suits to blow everything up. They probably thought all the data they extracted would be worth it and that there wasn't a way for me to have disabled all of the MS in time."

"Looks like the perks of looping really payed off here. Too bad there's no one else qualified to pilot the other G-weapons at the moment."

"Oh, I'll be setting them up with Natural-use OS on our way to pick up Lacus. Besides, even if I don't, the extra weaponry more than makes up for everything. I mean, wow, I had no idea they had so much anti-fortress weaponry on board. Seems like what they had used to destroy Heliopolis wasn't the only D-type gear they had."

"Heavy swords, heavy assault machine guns, recoilless rifles… a good haul. I'm also assuming you've already taken your cut out of that."

"Of course. I'd have done so with the Gundams, but that would have looked really suspicious without them having attacked me."

"I imagine," Natarle said with a smirk. After taking a swig of beer, she continued, "this does solve quite a bit of issues we would have had up until we leave ORB for the first time. Heck, with their strongest weapons at the time back in our hands, saving Vice Minister Allster and Admiral Halberton will be a cakewalk."

"Though, before we reach JOSH-A in Alaska, we should definitely set up a point for the five G-weapons to disappear. I don't want those Blue Cosmos jerks getting their hands on the actual machines," Kira declared.

"Agreed. I'll even try to pull for those extra Striker Packs from Morgenroete. Loops where you can bring out that kind of firepower will be very fun indeed."

"…Are you drunk already?"

"Mmmmmmaaaaayyyyybbbeeee?" She found her can to be empty after trying to take a sip. Throwing it into the nearby garbage bin, she then pulled another one out of her subspace pocket.

2.6

"Heeeeeeeyyyyy, sexy ladies. .op… Oppa Gundam Style!"

"How did Kira manage to program the G-weapons' autopilot systems to do that?!"

2.7a

Kira? ! That was the first word that entered into the red-haired Flay Allster's head. There was a clarity of mind that she hadn't known for

weeks, not since the destruction of the ship that contained her father. Memories were flooding into her head at this time. She remembered when Kira took care of her while she had a fever. She remembered when she accused him of pitying her, as her own guilt clawed her insides, and he was too emotionally drained to deal with it. She remembered him leaving for a battle that ended with him being declared MIA. She remembered the enemy pilot she tried to shoot because of her grief at losing Kira.

The redhead stumbled from her bed, recognizing it instantly as the one she had been sharing with Kira after she rather nastily broke up with her fiance.

"Birdy!" A familiar green and yellow robotic avian flew down and landed on her shoulder.

"It is you, right, Birdy?" She couldn't let herself believe that she was back here, during that point in her life she now hated as she reflected on it. More memories came; getting captured by that blonde ZAFT commander, Rau Le Creuset, to eventually act as his delivery girl with plans for the Neutron Jammer Cancelers to Blue Cosmos. Trying to warn the Archangel, even as Muruta Azreal threatened her with a gun. Escaping with the other bridge crew as Captain Natarle ordered everyone to leave before sealing herself in with the Blue Cosmos leader. The fight between Kira's Freedom and Rau's Providence. Her skin ablaze as her escape shuttle was shot down after being rescued from an intentional shot from Rau by Kira.

"Birdy?" The robotic pet said as it stared at his curiously. It was able to see the growing horror on her face as she remembered her death. She was so close to Kira, she had been rescued… so why? Why hadn't she been allowed to apologize to him in person? Tears started streaking down her face as one last memory of that time appeared.

It felt so distant, like she was barely on the edge of consciousness. She saw Kira in the Freedom's cockpit. He was crying… because he couldn't save her. Desperately, she reached out and held him, to try and comfort him. The words she spoke then, she couldn't hear them.

There was a feeling of being drawn away, but she didn't want to leave. She wanted to stay, to watch over and protect Kira like he had done for her. A bit longer, just a bit longer.

"Flay!" That voice cut through her returned memory like a gunshot. The brown haired, violet eyed man she loved was there. Her restraint snapped and the floodgates opened. She launched herself into his arms, crying. For his part, he didn't question why his girlfriend was crying like this, but he didn't care. He just hugged her as they stood there in the middle of his room.

The Ultimate Coordinator had only this thought, *When did Flay start looping?*

Thankfully, there wasn't a battle about to immediately start, so he was able to sit down with her and wait out her tears. It was funny, not in the haha way either. Even now, after all these loops, after all she had wormed her way into his heart in the name of getting revenge, after he had learned about her manipulation… he couldn't bring himself to hate her. In fact, he still loved her.

As her flood of tears ended, Kira was rather surprised. Letting go of her, he found her peacefully leaning on him in slumber. She had just literally cried herself to sleep. Now, he wasn't used to introducing new loopers yet, but he hadn't heard many stories about this happening before.

"Birdy?" His robotic companion asked from its perch on his computer desk.

"Oh boy, I'm not looking forward to explaining the loops to her."

"Birdy!" As if to comfort him, Birdy flew over and landed on his shoulder. "Birdy."

Kira chuckled at his little companion before standing up and gently settled Flay onto the bed so she could sleep. However, it wasn't long after that when the alerts started blaring.

"All hands, level one battlestations! Pilots, to your machines!"

"That's my cue. Watch over her, Birdy," he said on his way out while setting his friend built robot down on the desk again. He never knew how much Birdy actually understood, but it seemed to take his command seriously as the door closed.

"Birdy!"

"Hey, Lieutenant Badgiruel?" Kira said to the CIC while he was getting the Strike ready for its engagement.

"Yes, Ensign Yamato?" Natarle was quite good at acting like they weren't close friends when around the rest of the crew.

"A special someone's ready to talk. After this battle, have a chat with her please. I'll be occupied with a special project."

"Acknowledged, Ensign. See you on the other side." They had gotten very good at using code words to slip looping information under non-looper noses. In this case, Natarle knew that he meant Flay Allster was awake and that he was going to let the Strike be temporarily destroyed like in baseline so he could go get his upgrade.

"See you on the other side, Lieutenant."

2.7b

"I see." Flay was feeling depressed now. She had woken up some time after the battle and Natarle was there to greet her. She got the whole song and dance about looping and the multiverse. If it weren't for her memories, knowing how little Natarle ever lied and said Lieutenant pulling weaponry she couldn't possibly carry comfortably in her uniform from her subspace pocket, the overwhelmed redhead would have assumed that this was the most over the top prank she was the target of.

"Birdy!" The little bird robot hadn't strayed far from the girl his owner asked him to watch. It was currently flying over her head like an aircraft waiting for landing clearance.

"So, what happens now?"

"Kira's currently on his way to pick up his nuclear powered Gundam from ZAFT. He's gotten pretty good at being able to fake his death to do that. The Strike will be salvaged by ORB, so there's no real harm done. Though, once he gets his new Gundam, he becomes rather protective of it. Only time I've bothered asking about it, he told me, 'It is a precious gift. I have been given a Sword to protect others with.' In all the time I've been looping with Kira, I have never learned how he gets it, just that it's from ZAFT."

Natarle paused to take drain the current beer can she held. Flay didn't recall her being that big of a drinker.

"Well, that and it involves Lacus Clyne somehow."

That got Flay's attention. "That pink-haired songstress? How could she have any involvement in Mobile Suits?"

"Actually, she's the Captain of the Eternal when the Earth Alliance and ZAFT forces are mopped up by the Three Ships Alliance."

That blew the redhead's mind. The only contact Flay had with Lacus was during that brief time she was on the Archangel when Kira rescued her escape pod after the ship she was on was destroyed. A sigh left her lips, she had a lot of apologizing to do.

"Here," Natarle threw something to the younger woman. Upon catching it, she stared in bewilderment. It was a beer can.

"Lieutenant…"

"Now now. Don't worry so much. You are officially enlisted, so there shouldn't be a problem."

Flay sighed, while Birdy landed on her shoulder. "I wish Kira was here."

"Birdy!"

Kira was… in a rather uncomfortable position.

"I don't know what's going on! Last thing I remember, I was Chairwoman of the PLANT Supreme Council and I just went to bed shortly before you did and now, I'm back here during the first Bloody Valentine War!"

Lacus is looping too!? Only one thought came to his mind after that. How am I going to explain this situation to Flay?

2.1) Natarle's introduction...not much else to say

2.2) It's SCHADENFREUDE!

2.3) Not much to say about Eiken.

2.4) Kira's first loop into Equestria...I'm not entirely sure I'm okay with it now, but I'm pretty sure it's not breaking canon.

2.5) Because why steal through stealth when you can just mug the warship?

2.6) I don't think I'll ever think that kind of joke isn't funny.

2.7) Two love interests for the price of one...Jackpot?

Chapter 3

3.1a

"Ahem, gentlemen. I hope there's room at your table for a fifth," a squat man in a Navy officer's hat said as he lead the looper to a group of four others.

"Ha, fresh meat!" said an anthropomorphic rabbit with sharp teeth. The looper slowly climbed onto the stage and sat down at the one empty seat by the table. In addition to Max, the sharp toothed rabbit, there was: another squat guy in a wrestling mask and boxing gloves, Strong Bad; a huge Russian-speaking man in a red shirt and a big bandoleer of ammo, The Heavy; and a nerdy man in a two-toned blue sweater, Tycho.

"Perhaps our newcomer would like to set the stakes for tonight's game?" After a bit of pause, the looper tossed a large bundle of dollar bills onto the table.

"That sounded like ten thousand dollars landing on the table, to the note." The looper stared at the host in some surprise. He could tell that just by hearing it?! Oddly, none of the other players pulled out any money to match it.

"Would you settle for a travel pack of tissues and a half-eaten jar of maraschino cherries?" Asked the small rabbit.

The host seemed to consider it. "Hmm, I do relish a good cherry. But I'm afraid there may be an issue of parity."

"I don't have any pears either… Oh, I've also got thirty eight to forty K in uncut diamonds, but how about my gun and badge?" He'd then throw the offered items onto the table. "You know, you can't put a price on a license to maim."

"Very well. The player to eliminate Max from the game will receive a pistol and a Freelance Police badge."

"Oh… uh… I couldn't fit my briefcase full of cash in these pants, on account of my ample hind-bosom. But I do have these cool-cool-fady-shady Dangeresque Glasses! They're worth like five ten thousand dollarses." He had pulled out a pair of glasses that didn't actually have lenses, but little bars like window blinds and set them on his head. "So, we're good, right? You guys bought that?"

"If nobody else has a problem with it, Strong Bad will be buying in with collateral. Whoever knocks him out, will receive his buy in."

"I am sorry. I do not have this money," the Heavy said sadly. "I did, but Sasha has been very good lately and I wanted to get her gifts. The money is gone. I have no choice."

"Aw, you gotta play!" Max exclaimed as the Heavy stood up. However, he didn't leave the table. Instead, he reached down to pick up a very massive minigun.

"I have no choice but to buy in with Sasha, so I can keep honor."

"It's…It's… beautiful," the rabbit exclaimed.

"I hope this is alright," the big Russian said as he set the named weapon down again.

"Ha, I see no problem with it," the host stated. "Whoever knocks him out, will receive his buy in."

"Well, this is embarrassing. I generally walk around with large bricks of money with which to buy into back-room card games, but I'm a little light this evening. Anyway, I think this should even it up." Tycho

reached into a pocket to pull something out before tossing it onto the table. It was a gold wrist watch.

"The game will be No Limit Texas Hold'em. I will periodically raise the blinds. May the best player win!"

"Max has, two pair." Nines over Sevens with Ace kicker.

"The Player has, three of a kind." Fours with Ace and Ten kicker.

"The Player wins the hand… Max has been eliminated from play."

"Enjoy! Don't put your mouth on that, though, I can't speak to its cleanliness." The looper picked up Max's collateral and tucked them away.

"Strong Bad has, Ace high." Yeah, he went all in on a bluff some time after Max lost. The flop was against him.

"The Player has, a pair of fives." Anything beats just a high card.

"The Player wins the hand… Strong Bad has been eliminated from play."

"…Well, crap," he muttered before sagging in loss. He tossed the glasses to the looper before sulking off.

"The Heavy has, two pair." Jacks over tens with a King kicker.

"The Player has, a flush!" Two, Five, Ten, Jack, and King of Hearts.

"The Player wins the hand… The Heavy has been eliminated from play."

"Goodbye, my love." The Heavy declared sadly as he solemnly carried Sasha over to the looper.

"Tycho has, a straight!" Two of Clubs, Three of Hearts, Four of Clubs, Five of Spades, Six of Spades.

"The Player has, four of a kind!" All twos with a Jack kicker.

"The player wins the Tournament!"

"Well, Strong Bad didn't win, which pleases me. He needs to be taken down a peg," Tycho said that last part while imitating Strong Bad. As he left the table, the looper tucked away his watch.

With all the items stored away in the subspace pocket, the looper stood up and and decided to see if they had anything non-alcoholic at the bar here before leaving.

"I won those things from them… but what am I going to do with guns?" said lovely pink-haired pacifist, Lacus Clyne.

3.2

Gundam Seed/The Path: Workings of the Mind

Flay Allster found herself at the beginning of a dirt path at the end of a normal paved road. The path before her was surrounded by woodlands that instilled an uneasy feeling in the very young looper. She was unsure of proceeding further. The memories that had entered her head were rather… vague. She was named Flay Red, one of the daughters of the original Little Red Riding Hood. Currently, she was being dropped off for a walk down to Grandmother's house.

She had been given only one rule: stay on the path. Shivering, she held her red cloak closer to her. Underneath that was a black dress with a red skirt down to her knees and a pair of red boots. It was odd that Flay found herself feeling cold, since it was a nice, sunny day. It wasn't even windy. Still, taking a deep breath, she walked onward.

Walking for a couple minutes, Flay pondered why she was here. She had been told about Fused Loops, of course, but this felt… creepy. Like the entirety of her being was laid bare and being drawn on for some reason. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw something move in the distance. She couldn't tell what she had seen, but it set her on edge, like massive neon lights and warning bells telling her to stay the hell away from whatever it was.

This feeling was compounded by her body suddenly deciding to chase after it. It wasn't curiosity that made her move. No, nothing so childish. Even as she lost sight of the thing, her mind tried to sift through the feelings this place was instilling her with. The woods had an immense sensation of gloom upon it and the colors that reached her eyes seemed very washed out and dull. She looked at where she had come from to no longer see the bright and cheery path.

As she kept up on trying to sort out the sensations, the now lost girl found a strange flower. It was almost entirely white with seemingly rotating petals. When she picked it up, it disappeared and the feeling something was tugging in a certain direction. She continued wandering, having lost all sense of time as well as direction, picking each of such flowers she came across. Each one merely increased the sensation that she should be looking for something in these dreary woods.

Upon obtaining a sixth flower, she got a brief flash of a familiar outfit. She started shivering again. It had very negative memories attached to it. Unfortunately for her, she found it not long after: her Atlantic Federation enlisted uniform. She didn't touch it, but just being near it brought up horrible memories of when she had snapped and her body refused to leave its presence.

It wasn't the start, but the Crewman Second Class uniform was a major part of her attempted revenge. She had joined the military with the intent of keeping her friends, specifically Kira, in with her. Her shivering got worse even as she remembered the madness that had taken her, how she had intended to worm her way into Kira's heart so that he'd keep fighting to protect her until he died. That was to be her revenge, on the Coordinators for killing her father and on Kira for failing to save him. Just recalling this felt like her mind was being ripped in half.

But before it became too much, the pain suddenly eased as she felt some arms hugging her. The shivering stopped and her eyes refocused. Looking around, nobody was there and the uniform no longer pained her. She decided to move on after that harrowing experience, the forest's gloom still bearing down on her consciousness. As she kept going, she found more of those flowers again.

Unlike before, she didn't find six flowers before finding another painful memory object. Instead, during her walking around, she came across a trashed replica of the Archangel's bridge, specifically the area around the captain's chair. She had a few bad memories here, including when she was on the Archangel's sister ship, the Dominion. As she looked at the seat she had while on said sister ship, she remembered the start of her madness.

It was during the battle that cost her father, Vice Foreign Minister George Allster, his life. She had taken PLANT idol singer, Lacus Clyne, from her room and brought her to the bridge, yelling at the crew to tell the ZAFT forces to stop attacking or she'd harm the pink-haired young lady. They hadn't been quick enough, and her father's ship had been destroyed right before her eyes. Natarle Badgiruel had then used a similar threat to prevent the ZAFT forces from attacking the Archangel, but the damage had already been done. Flay's mind was filled with rage and hate.

The shivers started up again. This time with tears flowing even as she felt horrified by that madness. Unlike the last memory rush,

where she had been left paralyzed, this time her body started running away from the place giving her chills. However, the chills remained. She couldn't be sure how long she ran, but eventually she tripped and fell.

What she discovered upon recovering from the impact caused to her freeze in panic. It was remains of the Archangel's galley. Many painful memories existed there. During their capture at Artemis, the Eurasian Federation officer, Gerard Garcia, had come in looking for the Strike's pilot. Where she had outed Kira as a Coordinator, and the resulting aftermath started. At the time, she hadn't thought what she did was wrong, but now she realized what could have happened if the Blitz hadn't shown up shortly thereafter. That wasn't the only memory that forced itself to the surface.

She also ended up in a confrontation with Lacus Clyne there. The young songstress had been getting lonely in her room, so she had come out to eat with everyone at the galley. She wasn't supposed to, but what was the harm, right? Flay really started shuddering as she recalled how nasty she ended up acting toward the gentle singer, how she said that she didn't want any Coordinators acting friendly with her. Of course, Kira had been there too, so he was struck hard by that statement as well.

After Kira and Lacus had left, her other friends… and fiance, she had to remember… confronted her about her attitude just then, asking if she was a member of Blue Cosmos. She had told them she wasn't but thought they weren't entirely wrong. At the time, she only disagreed with their extreme methods. Now, she was horrified by how close she came to being just like that group because of her madness. In fact, she saw herself as having become worse than Blue Cosmos.

That thought caused her to collapse onto her knees as the shivers turned into outright spasms. She wanted to die right then and there. The fresh memories made her question her worth. She felt beyond the apologies she wanted to say to Kira, to Lacus, to Sai. An entire laundry list of people her madness had harmed. Did she even

deserve to be forgiven for what she had done, what she had tried to do?

Again, there was that sensation of being hugged. Of the sensations this place was forcing her to experience being blown away by a far more powerful force. As though someone she loved was there to ease her burdens. Again, Flay recovered herself and looked around, only to find no one. Still, that presence felt familiar, but never on that level.

After those painful breakdowns, the remaining memories didn't seem too bad in comparison. She'd find a gun, related to when she picked one up to shoot the enemy prisoner after the battle where they had thought Kira had died. She had been stopped, but the part that hurt was that she wanted to avenge Kira but couldn't bring herself to say it, instead resorting to a line straight from Blue Cosmos about how Coordinators should all die. That she wasn't able to admit to doing it for Kira… because she loved him and he wasn't there anymore.

She'd find a lake with a platform reminiscent of the Archangel's deck. There, Flay remembered the jealousy she felt when she saw how close Kira was to the girl she knew now was his Natural twin sister, Cagalli, although none of them had known it then. She was actually kind of embarrassed that she had resorted to flaunting herself in order to get his attention. Yeah, he had seen much more of her before, but her good looks were a matter of pride for her. It was one of the only things she had.

Anyway, there wasn't much after that memory. At least, she assumed there wasn't much else. She was kind of proven wrong when she came across the remnants of a doorframe in a sandy area in the forest. The same door leading into the Archangel from the outside. It was there that she had revealed to Sai, her former fiance, that she had been with Kira the previous night, thus breaking off their engagement… and had gotten her first experience of the potential danger Kira represented.

When Kira had said he was tired from a previous battle and that Sai should stop chasing Flay, Sai had gotten angry like any normal person would have and tried to get physical with the pair. Kira held him in a lock with one hand while saying that if he got serious, Sai would have no chance. Like he wasn't even putting any effort into it. That tiny sample size of his potential strength had made Flay think that Kira could have torn Sai apart with his bare hands if he wanted. It made her afraid of Kira… though she had pushed through it to comfort him after he talked about how kind she was, how she had said she'd protect him.

It really made Flay disgusted with herself that she was harming everyone around her so easily in her desire for vengeance. Well, she understood what they said about hindsight. Slipping away from that place of bad memories, she tried to find her way out of this twisted place. Picking a direction, she assumed she'd run out of forest eventually. She was proven wrong after walking for what felt like hours. Much to her frustration, she ended up right back at the sandy area door.

Suddenly, out of the corner of her eye, she spotted it. Whatever it was, it was the reason she was even in here, being tortured by her memories as a horrible person. She did not want to let it get away this time; she willingly gave chase. This time, it seemed it wanted to be chased as there were times she thought she had lost sight of it but then it sprinted by in a blur. She didn't notice that she was heading towards a brightly lit area of the forest, a cold yet alluring light.

As she entered that area, she noticed it was full of chairs stuck into the ground and there seemed to be the remains of a military base command room as part of the chair swarm. Then, she heard laughter, cruel psychopathic laughter. Sitting in a chair off to her left, she saw him again. A blonde man with a metal mask over his face in a ZAFT commander's uniform. He was unarmed, just like before.

Rau Le Creuset. That name haunted her, when she realized that the data he had given her would be used by the Atlantic Federation to

mass produce N-Jammer Cancelers to retrofit their nuclear warhead stock. When she had first met him, he had talked her down from shooting him before taking her back to his ship. As he had spoken to her, he had reminded her oddly of her father. Even now, she couldn't understand how she had made that connection. As she stood there, staring at the man who had used her to elevate Blue Cosmos into a position where they could wipe out the PLANTS and thus an overwhelming majority of Coordinators with nuclear weapons, she heard his laughter again… inside her head.

She wished she had a gun, just so she could shoot this menace to Humanity. Then she remembered that Natarle had taken her to the Archangel's armory for some weaponry to carry in her subspace pocket. However, regardless of how much she tried to use her subspace pocket, she couldn't pull anything out. She was locked out of it for this loop. All the while, he just sat there with a smug smirk on his face for her suffering, somehow projecting that damn laughter into her head.

When it seemed like she wasn't be able to handle it anymore, that feeling of being hugged came to her rescue once more. This time, however, she was able to see who it was as they released the hug to rush toward a rather shocked Rau. The blonde haired commander stood up as if torn between fleeing and lunging, but it didn't matter as the figure that ran towards him pulled back a fist and socked the guy in the jaw, causing the aberration to dissipate. Then, her rescuer turned to face her.

It was Kira, dressed in his pilot suit sans helmet. She stumbled trying to approach him, which prompted him to catch her. However, as she looked into his eyes, she could tell that he wasn't actually Kira. Straightening her out, he took her by the hand and lead her out of the dreary forest back to the bright path she had strayed from. Once in the glorious sunlight again, he hugged her and gave her a peck on the forehead before he ran back into the woods.

She had no idea what was really going on here, but she decided that it didn't matter. After being confronted by the horrible things she had

done, even in madness, she was now more determined than ever to fully apologize. But in order to do that properly, she had to finish this loop. With purpose, she strode into her grandmother's house at the end of the sunny path.

3.3

"FIRST BLOOD! DOUBLE KILL! MULTI KILL! KILLING SPREE! MEGA KILL! RAMPAGE! ULTRA KILL! DOMINATING! MONSTER KILL! UNSTOPPABLE! LUDICROUS KILL! GODLIKE! WICKED SICK!" Both sides of the fight were left completely baffled. Who was this single woman and how was she able to tear through both sides so easily?

"HAIL TO THE QUEEN, BABY!" shouted Natarle Badgiruel as she held up a Redeemer missile launcher. Seconds later…

"HOLY SHIT!"

3.1b

"She's cheating!" Max declared from his booth table behind his six foot tall anthropomorphic dog partner Sam.

"Huh?" the target of his accusation, one Lacus Clyne, responded. "How am I cheating?!"

She was currently playing Texas Hold'em with Brock Samson from the Venture Bros show, Claptrap from Borderlands, Ashley Williams from the Evil Dead and Army of Darkness movies, and Sam from Sam and Max: Freelance Police. She was also sitting on the biggest pile of chips at the table, with the next closest being less than half hers.

"I know psychic powers when I feel it! I have latent psychic powers myself! You're reading everyone's minds!"

"She doesn't need to read minds to get the better of these gentlemen," GLaDOS from Portal dropped down over the table, as she was serving as dealer. "I did say you all failed the test of your poker faces. Not her fault that she started taking advantage."

"I swear, she's using psychic powers!"

Lacus could only think in confusion at the accusation. Psychic powers, her? That couldn't be true, could it? She thought to the only time she knew that she had sensed something out of the ordinary. During that battle to stop the particle cannon superweapon Requiem and Gilbert Durandal, she had felt… Kira. She had sensed him, but other than identifying the feeling as related to the man she loved, she had nothing else to work with.

Did it even count if it was just the once? Why had she even felt that?

"Psychic powers? Well, it's been awhile since I've encountered those," stated Samson. "What am I thinking at this very moment?"

"I don't know," Lacus stated as neutrally as she could. "This is the first time I've been accused of having power beyond what a normal person would have."

"I could make some tests for psychic potential." The robotic voice of GLaDOS was close to gleeful as it could get. After all, this could be a very interesting avenue of study. "You know, for science."

"Thank you, but I must decline." Lacus hastily turned down the AI she knew to be less than stable. She wanted to retain all of her limbs, after all.

"A pity. Looks like I'm going to have to look elsewhere for candidates to study for psychic reaction."

Lacus did her best to hold in a shiver. GLaDOS really freaked her out.

3.4

"Flay Flash!" shouted one Flay Allster, named Flay Kisaragi in this loop. When she had first looped into this world, she was rather embarrassed about the power she had gained as the android daughter of a scientist. She had heard about Magical Girl loops from other loopers, but this apparently was more of a Sci-fi Girl place. Her power came from an Atmospheric Element Condenser, allowing her to alter clothing, weapons and even hair at will… with the trade off of needing to eat a whole lot more than normal.

Anyway, the embarrassing part came because every time she used the AEC to change her loadout, it left her naked for several seconds. Still, she was considering it a small price to pay for this kind of power and versatility. She was currently taking on the form her body considered its strongest. She was wearing a skin tight, mostly red unitard with the chest area blue and long white gloves.

"Lovely warrior, Cutie Flay!"

3.5

"Moon Eternal, Make UP!" Lacus Clyne, currently Lacus Tsukino, shouted as she activated her Eternal Moon Article. Normally, her hair was down or else in a single bun, but as she was engulfed in blinding light, her hair took on the traditional odango style her family was known for. Her outfit consisted of a heavily stylized and armor-esque sailor outfit, long white boots with red at the top with matching gloves, a triple layered skirt in the primary colors and red covers on her hair buns.

"I am, the sailor suited pretty soldier of love and justice, Eternal Sailor Moon!" Lacus was actually finding it rather fun to be this over the top. "And in the name of the moon, I will punish you!"

3.6

Natarle Badgiruel had a grin on her face, wearing the heavy armor of the Diamond Sword Tribe. She was spending as much time as she could to farm the weapons, armors, deployable stations and vehicles of this place she had ended up. The gun in her right hand was pretty much a standard weapon for everyone participating in these battles, the Spinfusor. It basically fired a large explosive disk.

It was considered a very impressive feat to take an enemy out in midair with one. After she had finished harvesting for the loop, to her preference, Natarle stepped out of her cover and was now sniping everyone not on her team out of the air with her Spinfusor. Everyone not on her side only said one thing…

"Shazbot!"

3.7

This was it, a showdown they both knew was coming. Lacus Clyne, known here as Lacus Takamachi, and Flay Allster, here known as Flay Testarossa. They were both Awake and on opposite sides on an issue not related to their in-loop quest. The only issue that prevented them from working together the instant they Woke up. Their shared love interest, Kira Yamato, not present in this loop. In a way, this was bad because he wasn't there to prevent the battle, but it did leave them to sort out the difference themselves.

Despite this being their first loop in the Nanohaverse, they had become familiar with harnessing magical power in previous Magical Girl loops, so they had power to throw around.

"Flay, please! Why are we fighting?!" Lacus shouted as stood her ground against the visibly upset Flay.

"Because I won't accept it!" Flay shouted back with tears building in her eyes. "I won't accept that I can't be with Kira! I never wake up during the time we are both on the Archangel at once! Once Kira ends up with you, circumstance forces me away from him and then I

die just as I meet Kira one last time! I can't take it! Can't…CAN'T I BE HAPPY AND LIVE AT LEAST ONCE?! BARDICHE!"

"Device form, set up!" the semi-sentient magical machine stated in support of its master.

Lacus knew that words were not enough at this time. Even though she was a pacifist, she was finding more and more that she had to fight on her own, rather than relying on Kira to do it. With a sad shake of her head, she knew what she had to do. The baseline loops weren't being kind of Flay and so she was reaching a horizon of despair. The pink-haired magical girl needed to power through that until she could connect with her.

"Raising Heart!"

"Standby ready. Device form, set up!" the intelligent device, normally Nanoha's but now serving Lacus, declared with conviction. Everyone watching knew to stay well away from the battle to follow.

"Photon Lancer!" Flay's device created four bright yellow spheres that shot towards Lacus. Currently, they were both flying with the systems their devices had set up for that. Lacus quickly dodged the beams of light that followed Flay's attack.

"Divine Shooter!" was Lacus's response in kind, creating her own pink colored spheres. The resulting beams of pink light caused Flay to move out of the way. This was going nowhere fast. The experience gained in other Magical Girl loops made basic spells like this too weak or slow to do anything as was. Though Lacus wasn't truly fighting, she was just trying to open a path for her words to get through.

Flay's mind wasn't quite in the best condition, due to her taking over Fate's life and thus all the abuse she got from the woman who was supposedly her mother. Stack that on some bad baseline memories and the redhead wasn't exactly stable right now. That in mind, she

wasn't stupid and knew that she couldn't win this battle if she didn't go beyond the spell list of Fate Testarossa.

"STRIKE BLAZER!" The impressively large and fast particle beam that resulted from this new spell matched the colors of the Launcher Strike's Agni hyper impulse cannon. Another shot fired and then another. Lacus kept dodging while noting how close each shot was coming to hitting her.

One last shot before Bardiche needed a small pause to vent the excess heat. In that break, Lacus launched her counterattack.

"Linear Freedom!" As paradoxical as the name might sound, Lacus saw what Flay had done to make her own spell and decided to mimic it. Flay was far more used to Kira piloting the Strike Gundam, thus took inspiration and name from that. Lacus, on the other hand, knew Kira to pilot the Gundam she had given him, the Freedom. If Flay wanted to draw on her love of Kira to fight, Lacus would gladly do so as well.

In this case, where Flay drew on the Launcher Striker pack of the Strike, Lacus drew on the linear guns of the Freedom. A pair of solid magic slugs shot from Raising Heart, with Flay barely evading to her right. Once Bardiche had cooled down enough for spell use again, Flay went in for melee attacks this time.

"STRIKE CALIBER!

Unlike the normal scythe form that Fate's Bardiche used, this one took on a more sword-like appearance. Except the tip of the intelligent device was at the far end like a spearhead and no actual blade along its length. That lack changed when it was revealed Flay had apparently altered Bardiche by force of will, while it was actually the power she got as Cutie Honey's replacement, into a man-portable variation of the Sword Striker pack's main weapon, the "Schwert Gewehr" 15.78m anti-ship sword. Thus, the part of the blade that mattered was actually where the beam created by the sword's particle emitters was located.

Lacus wasn't sure she should take the risk of trying a similar feat, since Raising Heart was designed almost purely for ranged spells. Which actually reminded her of the Freedom, the "sword to protect" that she had given to Kira. It was a mid to long range support fire Mobile Suit, to complement the Justice that his friend Athrun received. Except, the Freedom was equipped with a pair of beam sabers in case it had to go in close, Raising Heart had no such countermeasure. So, now suddenly in close quarters with no melee spells of her own, Lacus had to rely on the fact that Flay was slowed down by wielding the rather large and unfamiliar weapon to avoid being hit by it.

Taking an opening to slip behind her, Lacus blasted Flay with a quick Divine Shooter. It did no visible damage, but it did push her away some. Lacus took advantage of the gap to get even further away so she could try and set up for the winning blow.

"Sealing mode, set up!" Raising Heart declared as it changed.

With the the Intelligent Device in its most powerful configuration, Lacus prepared her attack. Runic circles and magic squares surrounded her as energy from the atmosphere was being drawn in. Flay had recovered by now and was rapidly approaching. The magical equations disappeared, leaving only four spheres surrounding Lacus as she aimed Raising Heart.

"FREEDOM FULL BURST!" The spheres on top shot out heavy beams of blue with red in the middle while the two on the bottom launched barrages of the solid magic slugs she used earlier. From Raising Heart itself came a more focused green beam. Flay only had a moment to look shocked before the attacks slammed right into her. The resulting explosion could be heard from miles away.

Of course, Lacus was much like Nanoha. If Nanoha's Starlight Breaker spell could be nonlethal on someone taking it head-on without defenses, then Lacus's Freedom Full Burst could too. Flay started falling as her power faded and consciousness was starting to follow. Lacus shot down after the falling girl to save her.

Unfortunately, she used up a lot of power in that last attack, so she was slower than she wanted to be. She caught and cradled her opponent only seconds before they both hit the ground.

Lacus woke up shortly after the impact. She had shielded Flay with her own body, the gouged trail in the ground telling the tale. Flay was unconscious in her arms. Shaking her head, she wondered what Kira would have thought of them fighting. She was actually kind of surprised with herself, since she didn't know she could resort to fighting Flay so easily. Could it be?

"Could I actually be jealous that I'm not the only one so close to Kira's heart? No, that can't be right. I don't feel it here, with Flay herself in my arms. So I can't be jealous if the source of it is here and I'm not feeling it… right?"

Lacus could only stare at the unconscious Flay as no answer was forthcoming in the silence surrounding them. The disquiet still lingered in her heart as the ones who had been watching the fight came running.

Bioshock Fused Loop part 1

Gundam SEED/Bioshock – A Man Chooses, part 1

Kira could feel it and it made him want to punch whoever was in charge of his loops. With all the Loops he had gone through by now, it was easy to tell whenever his body was genetically modified. Here he was, dripping wet in a wool sweater after Waking up in the remains of a plane crash and now standing in front of the door to a lighthouse in the middle of nowhere. Once again, he was an artificially-enhanced human, made when such enhancements weren't his choice to make. He dried his clothes with a quick application of magic and then make his way down a staircase, past a banner that said, "No God or Kings, only Man".

Eventually, he came to a dead end… well, mostly. The only way to proceed further was via an archaic submersible called a Bathysphere. It actually reminded him to some extent of the worker pods, back home. It also screamed of a trap. Still, he had to proceed with this Loop in order to find some answers. Stepping inside, he threw the switch.

"I am Andrew Ryan, and I'm here to ask you a question. Is a man not entitled to the sweat of his brow?

'No,' says the man in Washington, 'it belongs to the poor.'

'No,' says the man in the Vatican, 'it belongs to God.'

'No,' says the man in Moscow, 'it belongs to everyone.'

I rejected those answers; instead, I chose something different. I chose the impossible. I chose… Rapture.

A city where the artist would not fear the censor; where the scientist would not be bound by petty morality; where the great would not be constrained by the small!

And with the sweat of your brow, Rapture can become your city as well."

The sights of the deep ocean had been calming to the young man, but once the projector screen had appeared and the speech started, Kira was immediately on edge. He had seen such a world as this man described… HIS world. Science not bound by "petty morality", resulting in the Extended program, Rau Le Creuset… and himself. The great no longer "constrained" by the "small", he has encountered many a Coordinator, out-and-out arrogant because of their enhanced talents and seeing themselves as superior to Naturals. Blue Cosmos, "For the Preservation of Our Blue and Pure World".

Not even the magnificent sight of Rapture at the bottom of the sea could recover his befouled mood. Kira knew right away that he was about to step into a particularly big and smelly pile. The pleasant facade of the buildings outside concealed a very bad world, indeed. During his musings, the radio in the bathysphere had activated and a man with an Irish accent had started talking to another man and woman. When all was said and done, his ride had glided into Rapture to settle into a mostly dark area.

In the flickering lights outside his viewport, he saw a man waiting there to meet him… and a grotesque humanoid thing leap out to gut him with a pair of rusting hooks. Then, said thing jumped onto the bathysphere and started trying to tear its way in to get at him. Kira was tense, but also pretty sure he could handle whatever that thing was. However, he didn't get the chance as the creature leaped off and disappeared into the darkness.

Atlas started talking again, asking him to pick up the radio. The way he phrased it, though, something in the back of Kira's mind was telling him to resist it. Still, having a way to talk with someone was a good idea. The radio was bulky, but the young man shrugged that off as he hooked it onto his belt. With that in hand, he followed the instructions to exit the bathysphere. Oddly, before he continued

onward, he found himself shunting the slightly damaged submersible into his subspace pocket.

He blinked at how easily the packrat mentality had settled into a habit once he had started collecting things into his subspace pocket. Shaking his head to clear it, he walked through the empty room. It reminded him of an airport with all the abandoned luggage laying around. The lights were mostly out save for the occasional flicker here and there. Oddly, the darkness didn't bother him at all as his eyes could still see rather easily.

The "splicer", as Atlas had called it, leaped down from the ceiling to confront him. Then a spotlight shined on it, causing it to cringe from the light before it started to flee from some kind of flying gun turret. The machine gave chase, its gun firing full auto. With that done, Atlas asked him to find something to defend himself with. Again, the phrasing caused that feeling to resist to appear, even as he found a pipe wrench to swing around.

Using it to clear some debris from the mostly blocked doorway in front of him, Kira found himself assaulted as another splicer at the top of the stairs threw a burning couch at him. Calmly walking to one side to avoid the attempted homicide, Kira then met the splicer in melee combat. A blow to its gut didn't stop it, Kira dodging its counterattack pipe swing. The thing was clearly too insane to feel pain, if its non-reaction to the crushing blow to the arm holding the pipe meant anything.

Kira didn't like it, but he knew he had to take the killing stroke if he wanted to survive. Dodging the wild strike, the young man brought the solid metal tool down on the back of the splicer's neck. He cringed at the sick crunch it made as the life was ended instantly. As the body crumpled to the floor, something stuck out of its pockets. It was a syringe filled with some strange blue liquid. Putting it away in his subspace pocket, Kira then rummaged through the other pockets, finding a small medkit for his effort.

He wouldn't have done anything like this in his baseline, but just one look at this hellhole told him that anything he could find to increase his chances of survival was good. A noise suddenly shook him from his thoughts. It was a little girl's voice speaking some kind of advertisement for something called the Gatherer's Garden. Kira found the source on the floor above him, a vending machine of some kind with little girl statues on either side. In the dispenser cavity at the bottom was a strange bottle with a red liquid inside and a syringe similar to what he had gotten from the splicer.

For now, he ignored it. Scrounging around, he found some more medkits and syringes along with some surprisingly non-stale potato chips and chocolate bars. There was a only one door that could take him further, but the switch to open it didn't work and he didn't have any safe way to fix it. After some more times around to look for anything else of interest, Kira decided that the convenient liquid and syringe were the only way onward… was he in some kind of video game loop?

Kira found the syringe to be remarkably clean for the condition of its location. Shaking his head with some trepidation at what he was about to do, he stuck the needle into the bottle to draw out the liquid into the syringe. After making sure there were no air bubbles in the liquid, he slowly lined up the needle with the vein on his left forearm. With a tiny bit of hesitation, Kira plunged it into his arm and injected the solution into his body.

Kira had felt many different kinds of pain before, ever since he had found more than a few different ways to die in the loops, but this pain was on a completely different level. Electricity arched across his body as Atlas's voice came through the radio.

"Steady now. Your genetic code is being rewritten. Just hold on and you'll be fine!" Even with the pain racking his body, Kira couldn't help but note how casual that had sounded. Soon enough, he collapsed onto his knees from how hard it was to maintain standing with the pain going on. From there, the pain finally consumed his

consciousness and the last thing he saw before everything went dark was the Gatherer's Garden.

Gundam SEED/Bioshock – A Man Chooses, part 2

Kira could only stare in horror. Never, even in the mad science of his own loops, had he ever thought to have encountered such a twisted idea as the Little Sisters. Someone had taken these prepubescent girls and turned them into ghastly… things! He matched them up to the statues on the sides of that Gatherer's Garden, determining that the statues were merely beatified analogues for attracting customers. The closest thing that he could possibly compare it to was the Extended program: young children being put through rigorous combat training and drug regimens in order to allow them to fight on the same level as Coordinators… with all the scars, physical and mental, that came with it.

He got to watch a splicer try to attack the Little Sister for the material she was gathering. Her scream, however, attracted something that Kira really didn't look forward to facing, the protectors of the Little Sisters: the Big Daddy. A massive hunchbacked thing in a heavily armored diving suit and a drill on its right arm. With displays of immense strength, it slammed the offending splicer into the wall before drilling into its chest and then breaking the thick glass with the remains. Kira had seen overkill before, but this was beyond brutal.

Kira also didn't like hearing that, in order to survive, splicers needed to hunt these former children for the ADAM they carried. ADAM, a substance discovered at the bottom of the ocean which could alter genetic structures and thus was responsible for his current powers, and was being recycled from the bodies of the dead by the Little Sisters. These "plasmids" weren't really his thing, although he was finding the "One-Two Punch" to be a very effective tactic, indeed. He was also finding some pretty high quality wine and other spirits down here. Natarle would no doubt love them far more than he was.

He had needed the alcohol, once he started seeing the phantasms and listening to the audio tapes, events of before and during the time

this "paradise" went to hell on a Mass Driver. He was actually finding it odd, how easily his body this loop dealt with the hard stuff, having already drunk a few bottles whilst saving the rest for another loop. The only time he had noted a problem at all was after he had drunk multiple bottles in quick succession. It also numbed the pain of having no choice but to kill the inhabitants, all of whom were too far gone to try and reason with or warn off. Nearly all of them splicers were wearing party masks; apparently it was during the New Year's celebration that the whole place had gone insane.

There were a few times that he witnessed a dead splicer without its mask, or knocked the mask off of a live one to see the horrible things that ADAM and the plasmids had done to these once-human people. Kira admitted, it was hard to consider them as human anymore, from what he could see. It didn't help either that he could hear them, talking as if this place wasn't a rotting corpse that didn't even know it was already dead. He honestly wondered how much of his own sanity would be intact after this loop… or was he just going to keel over from alcohol poisoning?

In any case, he was currently on his way through the Medical Pavilion, a hacked and repaired security drone flying by his side. In his hand was a hefty revolver – he only resorted to the wrench whenever he was low on ammo for the gun. It meant he didn't have to hear or feel that sickening crunch of breaking bone and muscle as he did what he had to in order to survive. Thankfully the splicers were just as insanely homicidal toward each other as they were to him, and between that and his new security friend, he didn't really need to be all that close.

He was also finding audio logs regarding one Dr. Steinman. The doctor had clearly gone certifiable, as the combination of ADAM allowing him to go beyond what he had learned as a surgeon and Ryan's "paradise" allowing him to ignore the "phony ethics that held us back" had caused him to begin turning his own patients into Picasso-esque "art". The psychopath ranted about how there was no excuse *not* to use ADAM to sculpt the flesh like clay, how it was his

own imagination that wasn't keeping up, and how he would talk to the goddess Aphrodite. Kira genuinely wondered if he even would be *able* to go for the swift and merciful kill, or take his slowly-mounting rage out on the sick bastard's face.

One of the few things that Kira found he actually enjoyed out of this whole twisted Loop were the Gene Tonics he had found so far, such as Hacker's Delight. Hacking a security turret, drone, camera, or vending machine, and the act stimulating his body's own healing functions in a rather pleasant manner. He wasn't quite sure how it worked yet, but anything that could increase his ability to stay alive could only be a good thing. He found a second plasmid, this one granting him pyrokinesis in addition to his "fistful of lightning" as Atlas had called it, and another that enabled him to telekinetically pull objects towards him, allowing him to either collect them from a distance or else launch them back forward as a projectile.

Anyway, Kira had used these new resources to clear a path to the demented doctor. Said doctor had tried fleeing from him initially by blowing up the entrance he ran through, but a nearby explosives-throwing splicer had only given his Telekinesis plasmid the ammo to blow through the debris blocking that path. Giving chase to the mad surgeon led Kira to finding said monster operating on another victim.

"What can I do with this one, Aphrodite? She - won't - stay - still!" Each punctuation marked by a stab into the splicer on the table until she flopped down dead. "I want to make them beautiful, but they always turn out wrong! That one, too fat! This one, too tall! This one, too symmetrical! And now… What's this, Goddess? An intruder?! He's ugly! Ugly! Ugly! UGLYYYYYYYY!"

That last bout of insanity was marked by the doctor pulling out a tommy gun like the one Kira had acquired earlier and blasting at him from the other side of the glass separating him from Steinman's operating room. Kira found the engagement to be far longer than he had expected considering the surgeon's apparent size. Even with Security drones assisting him and his own guns pumping bullets into the man, he just wouldn't go down. It took using some anti-personnel

rounds he had found for his tommy gun to put big enough holes into the guy to finally put him down once and for all.

Taking the key he needed to proceed out of this hellhole from the dead doctor's corpse, Kira didn't even feel guilty for the kill. That was a man he would have gladly put onto his Kill on Sight list, right next to Rau Le Creuset. Shaking his head, he finished being a packrat before moving on to the Emergency Access tunnel. At least, that was his plan. It quickly changed when he came across an explosion, followed by a burning Big Daddy slamming into the hallway he was in.

This led him to find a splicer stalking towards the now very frightened Little Sister. However, before he could even start to intervene, a gunshot rang out and the splicer's arm now hung uselessly from a bullet to his left shoulder. Even as he turned to face his attacker, a second shot blew his brains to kingdom come and he fell down dead.

"Stay away from her, or it is you who will be shot next!" said a female voice from up on a balcony overhead. Kira recognized the voice as Dr. Tenenbaum from the audio tapes he had found.

"Easy now, Doctor. He's just looking for a wee bit of ADAM, just enough to get by," Atlas responded over the radio.

"I'll not have him hurt my Little Ones!" Tenenbaum snapped back vehemently.

"It's okay, lad. That's not a child, not anymore it ain't. Dr. Tenenbaum saw to that," Atlas told him as Kira started to move toward the frightened little girl while listening to the two bickering people.

" *Bitte* , do not hurt her! Have you no heart?" the woman staring at him asked as he moved.

"Aye, that's a pretty sermon coming from the ghoul who cooked up them creatures in the first place. Took fine little girls and turned them into that, didn't you?" Atlas threw back at the woman above Kira

before focusing his words on the young man. "Listen to me, boyo: you won't survive without the ADAM those… things… are carrying. Are you prepared to trade your life, the lives of my wife and child for Tenenbaum's little Frankensteins?" Kira, for his part, felt hugely conflicted, even as his body started moving forward again. Could he really take the life of one so young, if it meant his survival and the survival of others?

"Here! There is another way… Use this," she said as she tossed him a plasmid bottle. "Free them from their torment… I will make it worth your while… somehow."

She had presented Kira with an alternative to killing. Even without the promise of compensation, the violet-eyed man would not have hesitated to take the presented option. Pulling out an empty syringe, he loaded it with the solution and injected it. After that first time, he barely even felt it anymore when he injected himself with a new plasmid or gene tonic. He chanced a look up at the female doctor, noticing the happy partial smile of relief on her face. She really did care for the Little Sisters, didn't she?

With hands free, the young man slowly approached the very obviously frightened little girl. Picking her up gently, the instinct programmed into the plasmid Dr. Tenenbaum gave him caused him to raise his hand towards her head. Though she struggled in his grasp, he rubbed the hand, now lit with glowing veins, through her hair before bringing it down to her cheek. The same glowing veins spread over her face, and rapidly over her whole body. In a bright flash of light, he found himself holding one of his spare containers with a small amount of liquid ADAM… and a now decidedly more human-looking little girl in front of him. She thanked him before running off to a nearby hole in the wall, set specifically for Little Sisters.

"The path of the righteous is not always easy, yes? The reward will become clear in time… be patient," Dr. Tenenbaum said in her own way of thanks over his radio.

"Tenenbaum's playing you for a sap." Atlas said in response, once said woman had stopped talking. "Those things may look like wee little girls, but looks don't make it so. You'll need all the ADAM you can get to survive."

Kira didn't care to listen to Atlas at the moment. He had a serene smile on his face as he realized: even here, in this hellhole of a city, he had found life worth saving and the power to do so. Even if he gained no other reward, that was enough for him.

Gundam SEED/Bioshock – A Man Chooses, part 3

"Fill your cravings at the Circus of Values! HAHAHAHAHAHA!" a clown-themed vending machine chortled as Kira tried to empty it. Not actually trying to break it open, as the blasted things had proven resistant even to the heaviest impacts and even explosives he had taken from dead splicers. Shaking his head at the annoyance, in the end he had been forced to settle for hacking the price down as low as he could and just buying in bulk. Whatever he couldn't carry with him went right into his Pocket.

Apparently, even in loops where it had bitten him badly, he still apparently held onto some of that "When in Rome" habit, abstaining from using any of his other powers and equipment during most runs. However, as he had gone through more and more Fused Loops, he had been finding himself more and more comfortable with breaking "out of context" for fun. Not that he felt such things here. For whatever reason, something about this place just resonated with him too strongly for him to treat it with anything other than complete seriousness.

Anyway, he mentally went over each fight he had had with Big Daddies so far. The first type he had encountered, so called "Bouncers", were heavy melee fighters with their enormous bulk and arm drills… and the devastating charge they had, as he had learned the hard way during that fight. He had also discovered just how effective his guns were against that armored diving suit: namely, not very effective at all. Normal rounds were shaken off like rain; armor-

piercing rounds were a bit more effective, though still not as strong as he would have wished for, fighting such a behemoth.

Hence one of the reasons why he was loading up as much as he could from the vending machines. Still, he was a bit more optimistic about his odds for next time, thanks to a kind of homemade grenade launcher he had found. That just left his second Big Daddy battle: a completely different type, that Atlas had called "Rosie". These were more human-shaped with slightly less armor than the Bouncer type, but which they made up for via a massive Rivet Gun and proximity mines.

Ironically, it had been the mines that had allowed him to take it down, catching them with his Telekinesis and then throwing them back. Still, he counted himself lucky, as those rivets were, if anything, worse than any of the bullets he had been shot with so far. Now that he had some kind of baseline data to work with, he rapidly calculated more effective strategies for later fights with what he currently had available. Any new plasmids, gene tonics, and weaponry he gained were quickly added into the equations as well.

Once he had decided that his current strategies were good enough for now, he turned his mind to his current assignment. That is, taking pictures of some spider splicers with the research camera one Peach Wilkins had directed him to. Kira thought it odd, but had just shrugged when he had accepted it. Said young man had actually perked up when Atlas had come on the radio to tell him about the article he found about said research camera. Apparently, it didn't just take photos, but could do all sorts of things on its own like "analyze genetic information" and "parse biological structures". Atlas then admitted his ignorance on the subject, as he stopped trying to read the article because of "lots of other five-dollar words". It really made Kira want to read the article in question himself.

Splicers were seemingly out in full force in this place, but they weren't much of a threat to Kira – he was getting *very* good at getting the headshot. Anyway, he found the research camera soon enough, with a spider splicer conveniently in the room next door, observable

through a big window. Kira took a few snapshots, causing him to become very interested in the device when the camera showed key weaknesses in the splicer's body. A very fascinating device, this was.

With the fact that it could be used to detect weaknesses and other such data, Kira spent several minutes thereafter taking pictures of everything that moved. He even went and bought as much film as he could, so as not to run out any time soon. He was also quite surprised when the result of taking these photos resulted in him suddenly holding gene tonics he hadn't had before. He wasn't sure how exactly that worked, but shrugged it off as simply part of the Loop.

In any case, he had the spider splicer snapshots, which left him a bit queasy to learn that he could actually use their organs as makeshift first-aid kits. Shaking it off, he made his way back to Peach Wilkins. Thumping his wrench on the heavy metal door, the peep window slid open.

"The wharf rat didn't get himself et. You got something for me and my crew, or are you just looking to get criticized?" Kira frowned in confusion at that reaction. "You set here a spell, I need to set on some coffee, maybe put on some silverware and the like."

Then the window closed again. Atlas spoke to him again.

"Before you head into the Fisheries, a word to the wise. Ol' Peachy seems as straight as a dog's hind leg. You keep your eyes open."

The heavy metal door slid open at this point. As Kira takes his next steps in, Peachy came in over the radio.

"Nobody walks into my swampy carrying the heat. Put your weapons into the pneumo, and then I'll let you in." Kira looked over at the mail delivery tube near the door.

"If that's his price, you're gonna have to pay it. But he can't very well take away your plasmids, now can he?" Atlas said rather slyly.

While he could put them all in his subspace pocket, Kira figured they would notice if nothing went into the tube. So his revolver, tommy gun, shotgun and grenade launcher were dropped into the red tube near the door. He smirked as his wrench and camera weren't "heat", so he was allowed to carry it in with him as the door opened.

Traveling the corridor to the next big room, Kira knew it couldn't be this easy. There had to be another shoe waiting to drop any moment. While waiting for that shoe to drop, the young man got busy hacking everything he could find, such as the nearby security camera. Then, a fog quickly filled the room.

"Now, I bet when your boss weggled out of hell he done told the Devil he'd be right back and the Devil said, sure thing Mr. Fontaine I'll hold you a spot." Peach Wilkins voice came with very clear vehemence. That caused Kira to frown. Wasn't Frank Fontaine, the businessman responsible for Fontaine Futuristics and thus the large supply of ADAM products that made Rapture go to hell, supposed to be dead? "Ryan promised Fontaine was dust, and now here you are, doing his dirty… I guess that makes Ryan a bum, and you a…"

The voice just cut off abruptly as the fog cleared. Several splicers, with Peach leading the way, came rushing into the room to attack him. They didn't stand a chance, even though their leader took some punishment before going down. It reminded Kira of Dr. Steinman for some reason. Still, the only thing he had encountered so far capable of surviving an exploding fuel barrel to the face was a Big Daddy, and even it couldn't ignore something like that easily.

Now alone again, Kira immediately went packrat scavenger on the new corpses and on the surrounding area he had missed in the fog, including several doors sealed shut by ice, easily accessible via his Incinerate plasmid. After that, he reclaimed his weapons from the pneumo tube and carried on his merry way.

Kira paused by a very interesting vending machine… or at least, something roughly comparable to one. It was more like the Gene Banks he came across, but it was called Power to the People. It

seemed to be for upgrading weapons. There was a list of choices here for the four ones he currently carried. Universal among them was an option for increasing the weapon's damage, but each had a different choice for the other upgrade: an increased ammo capacity for the revolver, a recoil reducer for the tommy gun, a rate of fire increase for the shotgun, and the option to turn his explosives into shaped charges that would always face away from him for the grenade launcher.

Several of them were tempting, but ultimately he decided to go with the ammo capacity increase for the revolver. What resulted was the six-barrel cylinder being replaced by a feeding mechanism on the side that allowed for twenty-four consecutive rounds. It took some serious getting used to, as the added mass to the right side caused the gun's recoil to pull that way. It wasn't a big deal with his strength, but it was rather annoying to have to compensate for. Once he returned home or went to any other loop with the proper resources, he'd remake that upgrade properly.

Finding the way forward, another phantasm appeared: two men arguing about Fontaine. One was obviously very frightened of the guy from what he said to his friend before the both of them faded away. Further on were large quantities of ice blocking the way forward, easily solved by Incinerate. Atlas spoke up as Kira made his way through the tunnel he found.

"You got it! Should be smooth sailing from here. I'll meet you up ahead!" There was obvious relief in his voice. Well, if he was going to see his family again, Kira would be relieved too.

The thought of family caused the picture Kira had of him and his parents to flash in his mind… but why did it feel off? That caused Kira to pause for a moment. Why did seeing the image of his family photo in his mind feel like something was not right?

"I'm right outside the submarine bay, but I can't get in," Atlas's voice cut through his thought process. "I'll need you for that. My family can't be more than a hundred yards away."

Shaking the remaining thoughts of that picture from his mind, Kira sped down the tunnel as the thought to protect innocent lives made him move. As he got closer to the submarine bay, Atlas spoke up again.

"Hit the switch up there in the control booth, and let me in. I think it's time to shake hands and get acquainted." Kira came across a rock wall with a hole big enough to crawl through. As he did so, Andrew Ryan's voice came through the radio.

"You've had your fun, but enough is enough… If you press that button, you'll learn what it means to truly be my enemy."

Kira paused at that warning, but ultimately shrugged it off. The young man had a job to do and he didn't care if he had to make the bastard behind this hellhole his enemy. Climbing over some debris, Kira found himself out of the caves again. Breaking a lock and chain holding the way forward closed, the young man found himself staring at the submarine where Atlas said his family was waiting. It was on the other side of a metal separator, but he could see it.

Making his way to the control room, he was rather surprised that there was only that one switch. However, he shrugged it off like he had done with many other things in this Loop, and flipped the switch. Immediately the switch panel began to spark, and an alarm sounded in the room as the doors slammed shut. Looking out of the control room window, he saw Atlas come running out towards the submarine before turning to look up at him.

"You blow a fuse up there? Can't see a damn thing in that booth. Give me a tick and I'll get you out of there." Then, he turned and move towards the submarine and start yelling, "Moira! Can you hear me in there, darling?"

"So dark in here…" Andrew Ryan's voice came over the radio again as spider splicers began crawling over the walls. Kira lost sight of Atlas and the splicers as debris blocked the window. "If only your friend could look up and see you… maybe you could warn him… if

only you could do something… anything… except just stand there… and watch him die."

Something tickled the back of Kira's mind as he said that. Shouldn't that have been "watch *them* die"? Or did Ryan not know there were other people in that sub?

"They're everywhere! I can't hold'em, got to fall back! Get me family out of there and we'll regroup as soon as we can!" Atlas said as the doors opened again. Kira didn't waste any time, hastily blasting down the splicers he encountered as he rushed down toward the submarine dock.

"Get out if you can! Get out and we'll regroup!" Atlas shouted over the radio as Kira made his way down. However, once he got close to the bay entrance, splicers dropped down in front of the sub. Mere seconds after that, the submarine exploded.

"The Sub! NOOOOOOO!" Atlas screamed. Kira stood there in shock as the failure to save innocent lives punched him in the gut. The splicer that came at him to take advantage of his pause was quickly gunned down as anger took root in Kira's heart. Then, Andrew spoke up again.

"You ooze in like an assassin and then you try to sneak out of here like a thief. You're no CIA spook. Who are you? Why have you come here?" Kira didn't bother trying to reply. He was beyond words at the moment. Ryan continued in the silence, "There's two ways to deal with a mystery: uncover it… or eliminate it."

Seconds later, Atlas said in a voice full of pain and sorrow, "Get out… get out and get to Arcadia… Jesus Christ…"

With no more splicers to deal with, Kira felt numb as he approached the remains of the submarine. However, searching the remains for anything left of them made Kira feel that something was wrong. Even the most powerful conventional explosives he knew of would still leave some recognizable part of a human being behind, even at

ground zero. But Kira couldn't find anything to suggest anyone had been inside the submarine at the time of the explosion. Did that mean, Atlas was lying to him? But for what reason did he have to lie to Kira?

Gundam SEED/Bioshock – A Man Chooses, part 4

Kira found himself inside the lovely Arcadia Gardens next. It was full of plants of all kinds, flowers and trees especially. Since the disaster that had begun Rapture's plunge into madness and death, the plants of Arcadia had mostly been left to their own devices, spreading out from their original designated areas. If Rapture wasn't the hellhole it is now, Kira would have loved to take Flay and Lacus here. Especially Lacus, with her love of flower gardens.

By now, dealing with splicers was routine. Use research camera until it couldn't take any more data about a specific target, then blast them to hell with whatever he felt like at the time. Other than the surprise of the new Houdini splicers, it was getting boring, having to deal with the same kind of insane attacks over and over. Even Big Daddies were only a challenge now, simply due to how tough they were to take down without spending too much on resources. Rescuing Little Sisters and collecting the ADAM that resulted… It was pretty much only his drive to save those girls and any other possible survivors here that kept him going.

On the other hand, he probably had a collection of spirits now to match Natarle's, in size if not necessarily in variety… though even then, he still doubted the size part. His various baseline loops had also given him a liking of coffee thanks to Andrew Waltfeld, an enemy commander turned ally, though he had his own preferred tastes, which they argued about all the time. Said man was a coffee fiend, aficionado by his own words, always experimenting with new blends of his own making. This was significant due to the very impressive thermoses Kira kept finding, as they still had hot coffee after all the time they had been sitting there from the degradation.

Another thing providing Kira with entertainment was the fact that he was now finding items on the splicers and in the surrounding area that seemed to have no immediate value. It wasn't too much of a search before he found out why: the U-Invent machines similar to the Power to the Peoples and Gene banks. Put the requisite materials in and you get something usable out, usually ammo types that he couldn't buy at the vending machines and incredibly rare from what he had found so far. He wasn't quite sure about the gene tonics, however.

Once he decided that he was satisfied with his scavenging, Kira headed further into Arcadia. Atlas chimed in about his next destination. With no other clue on where to go, Kira accepted it with a shrug. After traveling a bit deeper, however, Atlas spoke up again.

"You might hear things about me, see my name about. Think what you will. There was a time I cared about politics… but it's just an excuse men use to kill one another." He sounded so tired all of a sudden. "I'm done with all that. I just want to see the sunlight again."

Kira supposed he could understand, since Atlas had just lost his wife and kid… hadn't he? That confusion came up again, however; it felt like there was something else there that was trying to keep it down, but wasn't big enough to hold it. He spotted something that diverted his thoughts from that, one of the rescued Little Sisters leaving a teddy bear and a gift by the nearest Gatherer's Garden. Kira remembered the first gift he had gotten from rescuing the Little Sisters, so it seemed like he received a new gift every three Sisters saved. It was the same kind of thing as the last gift; a large cache of ADAM and then any two of plasmids, gene tonics, ammo, medkits or cash.

Deciding that he had spent enough time in this section of Arcadia, Kira continued on to the door marked Rolling Hills. When the door opened, Andrew Ryan's voice came through the radio.

"On the surface, I once bought a forest. The Parasites claimed that the land belonged to God, and demanded I establish a public park

there. Why? So the rabble could stand slack-jawed under the canopy, and pretend it was Paradise earned. When Congress moved to nationalize my forest, I burned it to the ground. God did not plant the seeds of this Arcadia. I did." Another mark against the man who set this whole damn place up. Kira wondered if Ryan had intended to clear all the trees out for something, or if he was going to put up a toll booth so people would have to pay to get in.

More records of the past to be found in the form of audio tapes, more glimpses into the eyes that fell to madness. Then, something Kira considered unthinkable happened. From several vents around Arcadia came a thick, sickly green gas. As it spread among the plants, they withered away in moments. Atlas spoke up as this happened.

"This isn't right… I'm gonna need you to listen to me. I'm no sort of, Botanist, but I think Ryan has just killed Arcadia… the man's put something foul into the air. Bottom of the Ocean, boyo. All the oxygen comes from the trees. No trees, no oxygen. Give me a spell to think." That got Kira thinking. What could kill the trees like this, but leave humans unaffected? He wasn't harmed and neither were the splicers that he was still encountering. His mission control came back a moment later.

"Ryan's woman in Arcadia is an old betty named Langford. An okay sort, but not above doing a dirty job for a dollar. If she's still kicking around, I'm sure she's gonna want to save her trees. After all, she planted the damn things." So, that was Kira's next objective, find Julie Langford. As if to punctuate that thought, a female voice came over the loudspeakers.

"Oxygen levels critical. Lockdown initiated. All bulkhead doors are now sealed. Thank you!"

The radio spoke up again with Atlas on the other end, "Damn city's built to not let anyone out in the event of this kind of emergency… Either we get the trees back… or you're a permanent resident."

Wait a minute… Shouldn't getting people out of here have been the first priority?! That Andrew Ryan was a lunatic! Kira thought as he scrambled into the area marked Research Laboratories, to find the woman named Langford.

"My trees!" a female voice came over the loudspeaker as he approached the next door. "It wasn't you, was it? No… Ryan!… I think I've got a way to save the trees, it's a genetic vector that… Oh, look who I'm talking to… Could you find a sample of Rosa Gallica for me? …Look in the Grotto… I've got to keep working while there's still time."

Kira was a bit off-put by her attitude, but knew that there wasn't any time to dawdle. Finding the door in front of him locked, he doubled back to find the Grotto she mentioned.

Gundam SEED/Bioshock – A Man Chooses, part 5

Kira was able find the grotto Doctor Langford mentioned, and thus the roses she wanted him to bring back. After having hacked the nearby security measures, Kira plucked one of the flowers from the bush. Then, he heard Splicers coming and running afoul of the hacked security, with the machine gun turrets blazing away and the camera calling in the flying bots. He shrugged it off, beginning to see the splicers as terminally insane and thus their deaths as more of a mercy kill.

As he was walking back to the research laboratories, he looked around the Gardens and feel sad at how withered and lifeless all the plants are. It almost worked as a metaphor for Rapture itself: everything had been fine until a poison had been introduced and now everything was dying. Shaking that thought from his head, Kira sped up his pace towards the lab entrance. Once he got there, Julie Langford spoke to him again.

"You've brought the Rosa Gallica? Well, what are you waiting for? An engraved invitation? Send it through the Pneumo!" Kira did so, a bit confused at how it knew where to send what he was putting into it. At

least, he was certain it wasn't just a system where there were numerous two way connections. Apparently, she got it just fine as she spoke up again. "Yes, this is perfect… perfect… Come on up to my office… I'm letting you in now… I think I've got just the thing to put the green back in this forest."

Kira walked into the office that was now open to him. He did the usual scrounging and such as he worked his way in. Eventually, he made his way up to Julie's office. He could see her through the reinforced glass when Ryan's voice came through the loudspeaker.

"Julie, we made a business deal, you and I, did we not? Money changed hands. Let me read to you from the agreement. Section 3, Subsection 4."

"Mr. Ryan." Langford said as she was looking around like she expected him to jump out at her at any moment.

"'Ryan Corp maintains EXCLUSIVE rights to the creation, use, and exploitation of the Lazarus Vector.' Ownership is civilization, Julie. Without it, we're back in the swamp…" As he was speaking, a similar poisonous gas started spewing into the room. All the while, Julie was trying to protest.

"Mr. Ryan… Wait… No! Please! …Mr. Ryan!…" At this point, Kira couldn't take any more. Whipping out his machine gun with anti-armor rounds, he opened fire on the glass… and then saw the bullets bounce off without even a scratch.

What the? What kind of glass is this!? the young man shouted silently as the glass clouded with the green gas fogging it. He could hear Julie Langford on the other side, choking as the gas slowly robbed her of air. After a moment, she started writing a sequence of numbers that was only interrupted by her finally dying from the poison. It looked like the code to a safe or something like it, like he had seen before with other locks.

As the loss of life affected Kira, Atlas spoke up from the radio.

"Every time we get a yard ahead, Ryan goes and moves the goal line down to the other side of the field!" The door into the lab had opened and the gas had dissipated by now. One of the first things Kira found was a new weapon, the Chemical Thrower. Another of those crude but effective designs, he decided that he would look into making a more comfortable platform later. He also found audio tapes with Julie talking about the Lazarus Vector, the first on her dead body and the second in the safe that she had written the code for.

The one in the safe also mentioned the formula for the Lazarus Vector. He had plenty of one ingredient, didn't think it'd be difficult to find the second… but where to get the third? As he was leaving the lab to begin his search, Atlas recommended visiting the Farmer's Market. Kira noticed that the air was starting to feel a bit thin on the way there, but nothing he couldn't handle. Anyway, with no other clues, the young man went looking for the Farmer's Market.

Gundam SEED/Bioshock – A Man Chooses, part 6

It happened again. His mind flashed back to a memory, not of his parents this time, but of his house. It was… odd; it seemed more like an old black and white photo, discolored by age. Just randomly popped into his head as he made his way to the Farmer's Market. He didn't know why it did so… nor why it felt so wrong. Like the memory shouldn't even be there.

Kira shook his head as the door in front of him opened. The most prominent thing he saw immediately through the open door was a banner over another door with "Farmer's Market" in large letters, with a smaller caption underneath which reads: A Man creates. A parasite asks, 'Where's my share?' Kira just rolled his eyes as he walked through that door on his way to find what he sought.

As he found himself in another of the glass hallways that held a grand view of the ocean surrounding Rapture, Kira was himself saddened by the hellhole it had become and how little time he had to spend staring out at the breathtaking scenery outside the walls of the city. He walked passed the sight with a sigh before the next door

opened. Once inside the Farmer's Market, Kira found a Houdini Splicer attack someone or something outside his line of sight, only for said splicer to take a few rockets to the chest for his trouble.

Kira took notice, as he went about his routine of hacking the security and using the research camera that he'd developed by now, that Splicers were introducing new things for survival. Like some that have a Plasmid or Gene Tonic that allows them to maintain control over a security drone with their minds. Never more than one at a time, and they were still vulnerable to being hacked, but it was a good way to avoid being caught out alone. In any case, the place he walked through was an absolute mess; rotting food, oil spills, and other disgusting piles. Flies everywhere!

The young man stranded in Rapture actually resorted to an oxygen tank and mask he had in his subspace pocket, because the air made him want to vomit and he didn't want to be so debilitated when lack of awareness meant death. Once that problem was dealt with, Kira kept going. Taking out a couple of splicers with Telekinesis, Kira did wonder something. Why did certain gas tanks and fuel barrels explode when he threw them, when there wasn't any ignition trigger? Originally, he had used Telekinesis on them because they looked heavy enough to do serious damage, just through kinetic force. When they exploded upon impact, the young man had been taken aback.

He had actually taken to storing them in his subspace pocket with everything else he had, since fuel and gas were always useful for something. Like grilling; he had taken to grilling meals for special occasions while he and Lacus took care of the war orphans back in his baseline. It was a change of pace that he decided that he liked often enough to do more of. Anyway, after the first time, he inspected the next ones he came across and found nothing on the outside to cause such a conflagration when those specific containers were used as projectiles. However, as he then used the ones he inspected as such against some splicers attempting to ambush him moments later, he frowned when they did explode against the targets. Once he

had the time, Kira was going to inspect the inside of those ones he has collected.

Well anyway, he was slowly but surely gaining the material he needed to create the late Julie Langford's Lazarus Vector. Chlorophyll Solution, he already had more than enough of. Distilled water, he was finding easily enough… but the last one was an enzyme that came from honey bees. No idea where to get that. Then he spotted a sign about a nearby Apiary… How convenient. Kira supposed it made sense – how else would one pollinate plants and get bees to make honey? Not sure why it wasn't actually part of Arcadia, but whatever.

When he opened the door to the bee farm, he found a splicer in the process of being stung to death by a small swarm of bees he had angered. Once he fell to the ground, however, the bees immediately turned to come after Kira. With some quick thinking, he ignited a nearby oil slick to scare them off, causing them to disperse shortly afterwards. Once he was sure it was safe, he went back to the room to see if he could find enough of the enzyme he needed. He also found a Gatherer's Garden, stocking up on some new Plasmids and Gene Tonics while he was there.

There was a very large active swarm in the main hive room, but there was also some kind of smoke dispenser in the ceiling to scatter the bees temporarily. He activated the smoke, but didn't have much time to search before he was assaulted by about half a dozen splicers. They fell quickly, but the timer for the smoke had run out, so Kira hurried over to activate the smoke system again. And as he was searching, he was attacked by three more splicers, with a couple more getting caught in the swarm's frenzy as the smoke dissipated again. Sighing to himself, Kira activated the system yet again… and get attacked by splicers… where the heck did they keep coming from?!

Eventually, after many smokings and splicer attacks… and a convenient allotment of the enzyme in a safe in the hive room… Kira now had more than enough of that part of the Lazarus Vector. Now

to find more of the distilled water he needed. For that, he looked to a winery that was conveniently near the apiary. Yep, this was definitely a video game world, there was no doubt in Kira's mind now. As he stepped through the door into the winery, Atlas spoke up with a rather oddly chosen topic.

"Why do they wear those masks? Maybe there's a part of them that remembers how they used to be, how they used to look. And they're ashamed." He was referring to certain splicers who were wearing party masks, but they weren't the first ones he had seen, so why bring that up now? Not that it made any difference to Kira. Getting philosophical now wasn't going to help his chances of survival, especially against a group of people so terminally insane as to attack him on sight.

Anyway, more security hacks commenced as Kira continued his search for the distilled water. More groups of splicers to blast through, more scavenging of corpses and the boxes he could find… until he finally had everything he needed to make the Lazarus Vector.

"Do you have all the components for the Lazarus Vector yet? If you do, best head to a crafting station." Did this video game Kira was in not have a speaking protagonist? He never really cared much for those kinds, since it was basically to let the player put their own words into the character's mouth yet not actually giving them any of the freedom that was supposed to give. "Then, head back to Langford's lab and put the whole witch's brew in the mister. That should clear this fog right up."

It wasn't long before Kira found the nearest U-Invent machine and used it. Shortly afterwards, a bottle full of what the violet eyed man hoped was the key to undoing all the damage to the plants of Arcadia popped out of the machine.

"From the sounds of that U-Invent, I'm guessing you're the proud papa of a brand new Lazarus Vector." Rather interesting that he was paying that close attention to Kira's efforts. "Now drop the Vector into

a gadget called the Central Misting Control. Then we'll be cooking with gas."

Kira remembered that system as part of Julie's research lab. So, his next target location was back where he had come from. Back through the unbearably smelly Farmer's Market. Good thing he was still wearing that oxygen mask and tank.

Gundam SEED/Bioshock – A Man Chooses, part 7

"Don't fight the inevitable," Andrew Ryan spoke up as Kira reentered Arcadia. Kira was liking this guy less and less as his stay in his "paradise" continued. "You'll run out of oxygen soon, and then you'll just go to sleep."

As he spoke, the alarm triggered and the young man found himself besieged by a number of security drones. Some quick shots of the Winter Blast plasmid and hacking later, those drones were now under Kira's command. He was actually becoming fond of the growing supply of them in his subspace pocket, as he had found he couldn't take them between areas of Rapture. Remaking them with technology from his own universe was going to be fun, and a high priority once he got back. In any case, with a personal squad of drones now in tow, Kira trudged off in the direction he knew the Research Laboratories to be.

It was rather quiet inside the place, save a couple of splicers picking over Julie's corpse. Some gunshots from him and his drone squad made them into corpses when he found them. After picking them over, he found a place where he could insert the bottle of Lazarus Vector and activated the system. As it went to work, Atlas spoke up.

"Ah, listen to that damn thing gurgle and crank. How long is it going to take?"

"It seems Julie's death didn't provide a clear enough lesson to you. Perhaps this will suffice." Andrew cut in after Atlas was done talking.

"Ryan's got your number." Atlas warned Kira. "No doubt he'll be sending company. Best to head back to the lab entrance and seal her up… might be the only way to keep the splicers out."

The stranded young man didn't need being told twice. He sprinted down to the front desk and hit a security switch to secure the door. As Kira thought he could relax a bit, he was proven wrong as something hot looked like they were cutting through the security doors. Thinking a few choice curse words, Kira quickly loaded his guns with antipersonnel rounds. Around that time, his friend on the radio informed him of some things he had sent through the pneumo tube and how it wasn't much, but it was help. Kira quickly picked up the items from the red tube and stored them away.

As he started fighting off the splicers, the Lazarus Vector started filtering into the misting system. Several kills later, Atlas expressed frustration at the slow speed it took to do so.

"For Christ's sake, how long is that damn vector gonna take to cook?"

The security he had hacked in the labs earlier was taking some of the pressure off of him, but at the same time he couldn't be lazy just because he had help. With another wave of splicers dealt with and more on the way, Kira couldn't help but wonder why these guys were attacking him so fanatically, when he was actually doing all of them a service by trying to bring the trees back to life.

"You're about halfway there," Atlas chimed in on the progress of the Vector. Then, he said something probably intended to be encouraging, "Keep your hand on the throttle. Ryan's skin jobs aren't the type to get complacent."

Another wave of splicers spilled in, eager in their insanity for the kill of a fresh face. Kira could only shake his head as he took his shots carefully while trying to avoid being hit himself. He would have preferred being in either of his Gundams about now. At least they

had armor, Phase Shift at that. While taking this wave apart, a noise caught his and Atlas's attention.

"What was that? Is the vector ready? What are you waiting for? Hit the damn switch!" Again, Kira didn't need to be told twice. Another sprint to where he had secured the vector bottle to the machine and he threw the switch on the opposite side.

As the last of the splicers was being killed off by the hacked security, Kira watched through a nearby window as a bluish-green mist, much different than the poison gas Ryan had used, blew through Arcadia. He got to see the miraculous sight of all the trees and plants coming back to life with all their green foliage being restored too. It was an absolutely breathtaking sight.

"Well done, lad. Take a deep breath and enjoy it… and then head over to Rolling Hills and get the bathysphere. Next stop is Ryan's house. It's time for blood," Atlas declared with deadly seriousness. For his crimes, Kira was pretty much in agreement with the voice over the radio. Ryan was going to pay for his deeds.

After taking the time to clear out as many vending machines for supplies as he could with the cash he had been accumulating over his adventure, Kira had his way through Rolling Hills to the Rapture Metro. He was sure that's where he would find his ride to Ryan. Speaking of said bastard, he spoke up as Kira entered that area.

"Why are you so resistant to the traditional methods of separating a man from his soul?" Kira rolled his eyes. If there was one thing that the young man knew humans could do better than find creative ways of killing each other, it was finding creative ways to survive. Humans could be quite the geniuses when they had to fight for their lives… or when they were bored, as he had seen from his fellow loopers.

"You're not CIA, are you… You belong to Atlas," he said with realization. "The one roach I can't seem to exterminate. Don't worry. I just need time to find the proper poison."

Kira scoffed as he headed onwards. He found himself in a very large room, looking similar to the one he arrived in. There was a arrival/departure times board and everything, with a banner above it that read "The Great Chain of Industry ties and unites us". That made Kira frown upon reading it. He had found similar banners and even a few audio logs talking about this "great chain". Like one he just found on a nearby couch, with Ryan himself as the narrator.

"I believe in no God, no invisible man in the sky. But there is something more powerful than each of us, a combination of our efforts, a Great Chain of Industry that unites us. But it is only when we struggle in our own interest that pulls society in the right direction. The chain is too powerful and too mysterious for any government to guide. Any man who tells you different either has his hand in your pocket, or a pistol to your neck."

Kira's knuckles whitened from the grip he held on his weapon. Because of Andrew Ryan's belief, almost religiously fanatical from what Kira could tell, this city had happened. He had mounting evidence of the corruption that took place, of ideals being casually discarded for greed and horrific business practices. Of morals being abandoned for money and despicable men causing the breakdown of an otherwise mighty city because they cared for no one but themselves. And from the audio tapes he had found, Kira knew that Ryan had become that which his own paranoia had feared the most. Apparently, this city was supposed to be Ryan's paradise; a completely free market… which had collapsed under its own weight once ideals and morals took a backseat to the "wonders" of ADAM.

He didn't know how long he had been standing there, but when he started moving again, it was with purpose. Ryan and his splicers were dead men walking, but Kira still had the Little Sisters to rescue and nothing was going to stop him from that singular purpose, because all others had no meaning to him in this hellhole. He reached the bathysphere in this metro, walked inside and flipped its switch.

Well, this is going to be a long story. I've split up what has already been written into two parts, the second of which will go up next compilation. Until then, thanks for reading.

Chapter 5

4.1

Kira found himself alone in this loop, much to his annoyance. He found loops to be a pain without someone Awake beside him. That and they just weren't nearly as fun. So what did he feel like doing this loop for a challenge or fun? He's already done run-throughs of baseline with each of the different First Generation G-weapons half a dozen times, went without using Phase Shift Armor several dozen times, went without using any Striker Packs countless times...Heck, he's gone a few times without even using a Mobile Suit.

There were those variant loops where there were no Mobile Suits, just the other military hardware. That had been kind of fun. But as far as he could tell, it was just a baseline loop currently. And it just didn't feel right to break the script completely without anyone else here to enjoy it and/or deal with the fallout. So, what could he do to spice up this loop so he didn't feel so bored? He spotted the computer in his room currently opened to, but not actively playing, his music list... An idea was forming.

When Kira next sortied, his Gundam was blaring a song across all open channels. He had a far easier time making his disabling shots while this song was going, but his friends weren't exactly pleased with him either. It didn't help that he had used his knowledge of Cosmic Era communications tech to force the signal through regardless of anything save shutting the receiving ship or Mobile Suit down. Also, he was wearing earplugs himself.

"Nyan nyan nyan nyan nyan nyan nyan nya-nyan nya-nyan!" Sang Nyan-Cat.

4.2

Kira Woke up on his bed in his room on the Archangel. He couldn't see anything different from baseline in the place, so he decided to do some work on his computer. He frowned. Immediately upon reading the screen, he could tell something was off. Then, he decided to check his loop memories...and gained a huge desire to just drink himself under.

"Why is tha language of dis loop Gangsta?"

4.3

"The captain of this ship is a woman? Did we not have anyone else more qualified?" The blond prat named Muruta Azreal said in as condescending a tone as he could manage. Before he could say anything else, a very loud gunshot rang through the bridge. The now former leader of Blue Cosmos fell to the ground with a big bullet hole in his head.

"Oh dear, how clumsy of me. I forgot to put the safety on." Captain of the Dominion, Natarle Badgiruel said in a faux innocent voice as she was holding a Desert Eagle pistol chambered for .50AE rounds. "Crewman Allster, call the janitorial staff. There's a mess to clean up."

4.4

"No, they are being punished. They had a job to do and failed to do it. Perhaps this will teach them to do better the next time." The Blue Cosmos leader said about the "Boosted Men" who had returned because their medication wore out. Now he was leaving them to suffer the painful withdrawal side effects as "punishment". A sudden sound of a spring-loaded mechanism and then an awful crunch sound was heard by the bridge crew.

"Oh, that's where I left my beartrap! No wonder I couldn't find it for that hunting trip last year. It was in my sleeve!" The crew looked at their captain and her now late superior. Indeed, he had a giant metal

beartrap attached to his face. Nobody questioned how she was able to fit it into her sleeve or why it had gone unnoticed for several months.

4.5

"Get it off me, get it off me!" Muruta Azreal shouted through the giant, ferocious animal that had clamped its jaw onto his face. The bridge crew was too shocked to try and respond to his requests while the Captain could only frown as she watched.

"Who let my pet honey badger out of my room? There was a warning about him on the door." Said warning only consisted of Beware of Mittens with a frowning emote underneath. Nobody knew she had directed him to that room when he went looking for the bathroom. She was actually mildly impressed he had made it to the bridge in his condition.

4.6

"Here you are, Captain. That blend of tea I promised I would let you try when I was done making it." Flay said as she handed a fine china tea cup and plate to her waiting commanding officer. Said commander took a slow sniff of the drink before sipping it. She didn't swallow immediate, letting it roll around in her mouth for a moment to savor the taste and texture.

"Hey, where's Mr. Azreal? Wasn't he supposed to be on the bridge by now?" A crewman asked in confusion. Seconds later, several of the bridge crew gasped at the sight outside the window. Muruta Azreal was drifting out in space...without a normal suit on. Captain Natarle Badgiruel looked up when her crew reacted, but went right back to her tea the next moment. There was nothing but poise and discipline in her expression.

"This tea is well done, Crewman Allster."

4.7

Muruta Azreal was trying to hurry to the medical bay, but wasn't quite in good enough condition to run. That's what happens when you have a mass of metal known as a whaling harpoon stuck in your chest. He staggered out of the bridge as fast as his body could carry him, utter shock on his face at how the harpoon got there. How did that woman, the Dominion's Captain, fit a harpoon launcher unnoticed under her uniform skirt?!

4.8

Natarle Badgiruel and Flay Allster were pulling a stretcher along, containing one Muruta Azreal. Apparently, he had tried some improperly prepared fugu for lunch. While they said they were taking him to the medical bay, but that wasn't their actual destination. They had paused outside of the airlock, Flay asking.

"Aren't we going overboard in some of the ways we keep killing this guy?"

"Only if we see this waste of space as human. I certainly don't."

"Well, when you're right, you're right." They shoved the stretcher into the airlock and launched him into open space.

4.9

The sound of crackling electricity shook the bridge crew from their duties to look at the source of the sound. Muruta Azreal was currently being shocked by a taser held in their Captain's hand. He was covered in an electric aura like some kind of sadistic cartoon show as his body started smoking from the discharge. When she finally took her finger off the trigger, he dropped dead on the spot.

"What?" Natarle blinked at her crew. "I warned him not to touch me again, the pervert."

4.10

"What was that, bitch?!" The Blue Cosmos leader shrieked as Captain Badgiruel told him that they were surrendering to avoid the destruction of the Dominion in the worsening odds of the Battle of Jachin Due. The look on his face was understandably not happy...and he had a gun in his hand. He stepped closer to the Captain's chair, intending to shoot her depending on her answer...and perhaps even if she gave one that could pacify his mood. He never got the chance.

With the sound of grisly impact, everyone watching the crazed man saw the smooth point of a rapier sticking out of his mouth. Once it was extracted by the holder, his body fell to the floor and Flay wiped her blade on his coat.

"Thank you, Crewman Allster."

"Just doing my duty, Ma'am." The rest of the crew got back to work. They were still in the middle of a battle and no one really liked the guy anyway.

4.11

Flay woke up to find herself in her old quarters aboard the Archangel. As the loop memories kicked in, she made a startling realization. She had looped in during the time Lacus was on board the ship with her. Almost in a daze, she felt the Looper Ping and responded...at the same time as another ping. So, there were two other loopers currently on board the Archangel, from what she could tell.

She was about to get off her bed when she had the oddest feeling in her mind. It was like a surge of electricity through her brain, directing her attention to somewhere nearby. Like an irresistible call from deep inside her heart. A familiar call, one that she has desired to hear for a long time. Suddenly, she wasn't in her room anymore, but in a vast and colorful space. The colors were cheerful and vibrant with smalls

stars pockmarking the flowing bands every now and then...and there, what felt like a long ways away, were Kira and Lacus.

They were floating in this space, drifting ever closer together. She tried moving closer, but she felt resistance...like the space around her denied her access to even basic movement. She raised her arms to the couple floating towards each other, longing for them to see her. When they didn't seem to notice, she tried to speak. There was no sound as she tried.

The tears were starting to well up in her eyes, as the resistance felt painful and her silence scared her. Why was she being denied what they shared? She wasn't the broken, insane, vengeful bitch she was all that time ago anymore...wasn't she? Her lips moved to form the words she wanted to say so desperately, but still the sound refused to form. As they continued drifting closer, they were getting further from her.

Please, don't go! Flay started screaming in her head. The words formed on her lips, but still no sound came from them. *Let me talk to you! I want to tell you how I feel! Why can't I speak?! Why can't I move?! I want to go to you! I want to live with you! Kira, Lacus, SOMEONE!*

The resistance was threatening to break her mind even worse than the time her father was killed in front of her. This time, she feared the change would be irreversible. So she continued trying to shout in this endless space. As she could see Kira and Lacus come together, she threw her entire being against the force trying to hold her back.

I love you! I want to be happy with you! Let me stay! Let me be happy! "PLEASE DON'T LEAVE ME ALONE!"

Just like that, her voice shot across that endless distance. The lovers in front of her, that impossible length away from her, turned in her direction. Tears mostly blurred her vision by this point, but just a moment later, she felt two hands take hold of her outstretched ones. The resistance tried to keep its hold, but it proved no match for the

pull she felt. Suddenly, the distance between her and the other two in this vibrant space was reduced to nearly nothing.

There were no words needed anymore. She could feel them with all her heart and soul and they could feel her. The loving smiles on their faces caused her tears of sorrow and desperation to turn into tears of utter joy. The pulling grip on her arms were turned into gentle hands in her own. This sensation, they would always remember. They were never alone, because they would always have each other.

As they leaned in to touch foreheads together, they all felt content. This was how things should be.

Mu La Flaga suddenly blushed. The Hawk of Endymion had a strange feeling pass through his mind, distracting him from the meeting he happened to be in. While he didn't really understand the power he held, he knew how to use it well. And this power led him to seeing the three embracing lovers, leading to his blush as he quickly ended his connection to allow them privacy.

He waved off the questioning looks of Murrue Ramius and Natarle Badgiruel. They wouldn't be able to understand what was happening. Still, while he didn't want to interrupt their bonding now, he was going to have words with the three younger adults. If they were going to share their feelings of love, they needed to learn not to project them so indiscriminately.

4.12

Mu La Flaga, the Hawk of Endymion, resident badass and mentor to Kira...found himself confused. The last thing he remembered was settling into a civilian's life with Murrue Ramius after the last battle of the Second Bloody Valentine War. Now, he was once again in the cockpit of his Moebius Zero. Rau Le Creuset had just been chased out of the Heliopolis Colony. What the heck was going on here?

He landed his Zero inside the hanger of the Archangel, ahead of the Strike...wait, that's not the Strike. What was the Buster doing, coming to the Archangel? When it landed and knelt down, it was carrying a number of rather familiar passengers. There was Captain Ramius and Kira's friends, which meant...the pilot leaving the Buster confirmed it to be Kira. Mu La Flaga was very confused.

Shaking his head to clear it, Mu just ignored it so he could figure it out when he had some privacy later. He asked who the senior officer was, like the time in his memory, but he avoided asking Kira if he was a Coordinator. He didn't want the security team to point their guns at the boy due to mere curiosity, since he knew the answer already. Oddly, he got some curious looks from both Kira and Natarle. What's that all about?

After the meeting with Murrue and Natarle that he remembered regarding the pilot of the G-weapon, him pointing out that Kira had modified the OS into something beyond Mu La Flaga's ability to operate. However, the currently Ensign Natarle asked him to stay after the meeting due to having something to discuss with the lieutenant. Again, he was confused by this change.

Once they were alone, Natarle didn't waste any time asking.

"This isn't the first time you've been through today, has it?"

Now, Mu liked to think he had seen enough as a pilot already that he's hard to surprise...yeah, he was caught completely flatfooted on this front.

"How did...?"

When she smirked at his reaction, she pulled out a futuristic looking gun that certainly didn't come from this Earth Sphere.

"Welcome to the Multiverse, Lieutenant La Flaga."

4.13 Wildrook

If it was possible for a Coordinator to suffer from a migraine, Kira was feeling one right now as he banged his head against the hangar wall.

This caught Flay's eye. "Kira!" she yelled. "What..."

"I'm just going to say that it's karma for all the various ways I've trolled ZAFT," Kira replied. Then he stared at his G-weapon. "I think it's a baseline model, but that doesn't explain how it could move like that."

"Wait, someone re-programmed the Strike?" Flay asked Kira. When he nodded as his answer, she continued. "And you can't change it back?! I thought you were the best computer programmer in baseline!"

"Apparently, someone better than me is on board." He slammed his head against the wall again. Then he faced Flay once more. "It must be a Looper, but that means they didn't answer the Ping and they've avoided me finding them among the crew. You wouldn't happened to have seen someone out of place, have you?"

Flay looked thoughtful for a moment, but did eventually remember something. "I think Lieutenant Badgiruel said that we had someone named Shinji Ikari on board."

Kira turned around to continue trying to dent the wall with his forehead. "One of the Original Seven was here and just decided to troll me without explaining why," he growled out in between slams. Flay gave him a very confused look.

Eventually, he stopped and faced his redheaded girlfriend while leaning back against the wall. "No idea why he set this up as a prank, but what did I do to deserve him setting up the Strike to react to THAT word?"

And then Flay said something ignorant.

"What word?" she asked him.

Kira instantly went into Panic Mode.

"Flay, DON'T!" he yelled, but it was too late.

The ship started shaking as the Gundam went, "A-WELL-A BIRD, BIRD, BIRD, B-BIRD'S THE WORD

A-WELL-A BIRD, BIRD, BIRD, B-BIRD'S THE WORD!"

4.14 taalismn

The communication from the ZGMF-X13A Providence caught them by surprise, but the fact that Rau Le Creuset was not wearing his mask...well, his usual mask...was even more of a surprise. Instead, the clone of Al Da Flaga had covered his face in white makeup. For further creepy points: his lips were filled out in bright red, black rouge had been applied over his eyes, and a tint of green highlights ran through his blond hair.

Le Creuset looked out of the video display at the Archangel's bridge crew, his lips cracking in a grin utterly lacking in any sort of warmth or good humor; "Why so serious?"

Kira, Flay, and Natarle shared one common thought: *Shit* .

4.15 taalismn

Grand Moff Zala looked with satisfaction at the screens as they reported the progress of his unfolding plan.

"As soon as Death GENESIS clears the moon's horizon, destroy the planet."

Beside him on the bridge the captive Princess Cagalli couldn't believe what she was seeing. "You can't! You're mad! You can't just destroy the planet!"

Zala was unmoved; "My dear, you underestimate the power of this PLANT. A message must be sent to your pathetic Natural rebellion. Your extinction is long overdue."

(Meanwhile on a small civilian ship)

Kira looked at the other people in the room and sighed. *What the hell did I do in the last Loop to deserve this?*

Trapped in a fused Lucasian Loop, bound on a trip to destiny. Knowing DAMNED well things were going to get weirder before they got better.

Princess Cagalli, maiden in distress? Okay, sorta could see that coming.

And he had to admit, Athrun made for a decent Corellian rogue.

Mu La Flaga as Kira's elder spiritual mentor? Okay, he looked a little strange with the beard, but it somehow managed to work.

A particularly hirsute Yzak Joule as Athrun's white-furred sidekick? Okay, that was starting to push it.

But he just KNEW things could get worse.

I swear, if Rau Le Creuset shows up in black, breathing heavily, claiming to be my father, I am crashing this Loop!

4.16

"This is going to be an interesting loop." Kira said to himself as he led two other G-Weapon Mobile Suits to the Archangel. Both Flay and Natarle wanted to learn to be pilots this loop. Things had been

arranged so Kira got the Buster, Natarle got the Blitz and Flay got the Strike. Thankfully, Kira had made a number of flash drives many loops back with a Natural use OS that could overwrite the cruddy unfinished OS in the Mobile Suits in seconds.

With two of the most pivotal G-Weapons out of ZAFT hands, they wouldn't have to worry nearly as much as they would in baseline. The Duel was very limited even compared to the baseline Strike, since the Duel couldn't use Striker Packs and only had the CIWS vulcans for built in weaponry. As powerful as the Aegis is, it can only use its most powerful weapon in Mobile Armor form and the pilot inside would hesitate in fighting Kira. So, all he had to do was teach. Shouldn't be that hard, right?

Well, Natarle seemed to be learning easily enough, since she spent some time in universes with vehicles that required pilot skills so there were some similarities there. Flay on the other hand...

"I'll have to get it right sometime!" he heard her scream over the comlink as the Strike zoomed passed the Buster while flailing like a fish out of water. Kira could only facepalm.

taalismn

"Come on, people! Is this REALLY necessary?" Flay asked

Kira and Natarle answered simultaneously, "YES!"

Flay pouted. "But it's HUMILIATING!"

"We can't risk you flying off on a collision course with the PLANTs," Kira stated.

"Or you falling into the Earth's gravity well and burning up," Natarle continued.

Flay groaned, "..umph..."

Her Strike Gundam was in a tether harness, with a mile length of line stretching back to the Archangel.

4.17 **Gundam SEED Hub Loop**

Kira blinked rapidly as he woke up, in the normal and Looper sense. He wasn't in his apartment in Heliopolis, in his room on the Archangel, in the orphanage with Lacus nor even in the house they shared when she becomes PLANT Council Chairman. Sitting up, he took stock of the situation. The room he found himself was very messy, compared to his usual rooms which were perfectly clean, with a full trash can and a pile of dirty clothes on the floor by the door...which was wooden. There was a computer on a very cluttered desk, with various cords and disks strewn about. There was also a bookcase that reached the ceiling, loaded with Gunpla models. Then the memories hit.

His name was Kyle Yearling and was currently in college. He was a huge fan of all things Gundam, especially the Cosmic Era. Kira Yamato was his favorite character and he cosplayed as him all the time. He had a girlfriend in one, Lara Carol, who dyed her hair pink and love dressing up as Lacus Clyne. His job as a computer programmer and all around techie left him more than enough to feed his gaming and Gunpla habits while still depositing a decent sum into savings accounts. Currently, it was only a couple days before he and his girlfriend went over to a nearby Gundam convention.

All of that, however, took a bit of a back seat in Kira's mind. For once, after all these loops, he was a normal person without having replaced someone else in a fused loop! He would have probably cheered, but that would most likely attract the confused curiosity of Lara, who was in the kitchen making breakfast about now. So, he forced his feelings down and took a deep breath before leaving the room. As he suspected, there was Lara in front of the stove. Judging by the smell and setup, she was making white chocolate waffles and beef sausage. She turned to look at him with her usual smile.

"Good morning, Kyle. Breakfast is almost ready. I know how Loopy you can be right out of bed." Kira blinked, but then smiled.

"Sorry, it's just so hard to Wake up...I've missed you the past few loops, Lacus."

"I've missed you too, Kira." She replied as she turned fully so she could hug her boyfriend. After that, she quickly turned back to her cooking so she didn't burn breakfast. "Last time I saw our Flay, she and I had taken the places of Bayonetta and Jeanne."

Kira found that interesting. In his loop memories, the Bayonetta games were a prominent series he enjoyed. He also remembered one particular convention where he and Lara went as Luka and Bayonetta respectively.

"That's cool. You were Jeanne?" He asked curiously.

"Yes, though we had a bit of an argument after slaying Jubileus about who should have been who." She replied as she started taking the sausages out of the pan and the waffles out of the iron. "Eventually, we decided that she was Bayonetta because of being intrinsic to the Big Bad's plans, much like how Flay was the reason Rau Le Creuset got the plans for the N Jammer Canceler to Muruta Azreal."

"Was Balder..." Kira started.

"No, actually. It was just us who replaced people. Which was odd, because that means we didn't know who the Anchor was. No one was forthcoming about that." Lara said as she finished putting breakfast on a pair of plates before taking them to the table to eat. They went quiet as they ate, since it was bad manners to talk with your mouth full. When they were done, Kira took the plates to the sink.

"So, did you enjoy being an Umbra Witch? There's a lot of combat in that game and the Witches have to kill angels for their halos or else

their souls are dragged down to Inferno early." The young man asked with a bit of worry. After all, he knew she was even more of a devout pacifist than he was.

She didn't speak for several seconds, making her boyfriend think it had been traumatic for her. Well, she did go through a general baseline loop, so to be fair, she probably was. Considering Jeanne is brainwashed by the Big Bad in the first game and spends a fair bit of the second with her soul in Hell, it's not very pleasant to be the ally of her fellow Umbra Witch.

"I...I enjoyed the fighting, to a frightening extent. Not as much as Jeanne's memories told me I should have, but I'll consider that an improvement over her callous disregard for the collateral damage in the fight between Inferno and Paradiso. It helped a bit that the angels weren't really human, being just as abominable as the demons they fought. Still...the combat was disgustingly brutal, with many of my enemies being torn into bloody shreds under my power. I hated it...yet, I loved it too. Like the very act of killing them so bloodily was a visceral joy."

Kira didn't say anything. He was just waiting for her to finish.

"I found the very act of killing in all the ways an Umbra Witch could do so unpleasant. At range with gun and bow, the experience was so detached from the death dealt that it chilled me. While fighting close had the exact opposite, causing me to feel every blow and their bodies come apart under the impacts of my power. I managed to hold it together while Flay was with me, but..."

She shuddered heavily as the memories of her time as a bodiless soul in Inferno came to the surface. Jeanne had shrugged it off in baseline, but now that she wasn't Jeanne, Lacus was struggling to keep her mind together. Kira didn't hesitate to hold onto her tightly, since it was obvious she needed the comfort. He knew exactly what she was suffering from as he had dealt with the same thing when he started piloting the Strike. He didn't want to kill, but had to kill to

survive. If it wasn't for his friends on the Archangel, he may well have snapped and given up his kind heart to that ruthless instinct.

After some time had passed, her body stopped shaking. She pulled away from Kira. They didn't say anything to each other for several seconds.

"So, that Gundam convention we're going to...Does Admiral Yamato and Chairman Clyne sound like a good idea?" Lacus asked conversationally.

"Those sound perfect." Kira responded, reaching his left arm up. Lacus saw the gesture and raised her right arm in turn. They connected their hands, palm to palm, and then slid their fingers between each other. This gesture they did had become significant to them and Flay, representing their shared connection on a level far beyond the physical.

"Too bad we don't have Flay here. It just doesn't feel right for us to have a vacation loop like this and not have her in on it," Lacus stated, a bit sad the girl she bonded with wasn't with them.

"I know. All we can hope is that she's enjoying herself wherever she is." Kira answered.

"Hey hey hey! Badass bounty hunter, coming through!" Flay Allster, clad in the red, yellow and violet of the Gravity Suit, ran through the corridor coated in the energy of the Speed Booster.

This was a good vacation. Kira and Lacus...excuse me, Kyle and Lara...were all dressed up in their respective baseline finale. That is, in his ZAFT Admiral white uniform and her PLANT Council Chairman dress. It was the day of the convention and they were now walking into the building. Since they were seasoned goers in their loop memories, they carried big duffel bags with water bottles and foods for the hours they'd be in the building while also having plenty of room for everything they'd be buying. They had also saved up quite

a bit of cash to buy stuff with over the days they were at the convention. Finally, they both had plenty of SD cards and batteries for their cameras, since pictures were a big part of the experience.

So, first day, everything fine and dandy. Friendly people who liked their cosplay and people wearing nice cosplay themselves, like some fellow Gundam SEED fans dressed as Murrue or Kira in his pilot suit or a group of guys dressed up as the Red Suits of ZAFT. Many pictures were taken. They found model kits Kyle didn't have yet, some doujinshi involving Kira, Flay and Lacus that made them blush...though they bought some to show to Flay when they next looped with her...Lara found some handmade plushies of the Archangel crew she just had to buy in one stall, Kyle even discovered a stall with some older Gundam games he had a hard time finding.

At one point, Lara actually brought out a small ball painted pink and detailed to look like her favorite Haro, Pinky. That got a chuckle out of her boyfriend and several pictures from other convention goers ensued. She was also asked if she could sing like Lacus could. Smirking a bit at the challenge, she did sing In This Quiet Night for them. They were floored by how good she was. Kira grinned at her performance, the slow and solemn melody she first made. Meer Campbell, the doppelganger made by Gilbert didn't even compare as Lacus was classically trained in contrast to the Pop singing the fake did.

However, for all the fun they could have here, Kyle knew that there lurked a great annoyance for fans of certain shows...Trolls and jerks. He was used to dealing with them, since he was such a convention goer. He spotted a trio of such people coming his way, dressed in the oddly popular Zeon uniform. The man who looked like the leader had a nasty sneer on his face as he got close.

"Hey look, it's a member of the Church of Jesus Yamato!" One of his lackeys mocked to start them off. "Silly poser. Everyone knows the Gundam franchise hasn't been the same since it left the Universal Century! All the other Gundams are just pale imitations at best."

Of course, he just gave them a deadpan look. No need to say anything yet. This hasn't been the first time he's been bothered by such hatred and ignorance. However, if they decided to try and force the issue, he'd have to deal with them.

"Hey, what's that look for? I'm just saying the truth and anyone who can call themselves a Gundam fan knows it!"

"Hey, bro. What if this guy dresses like his Lord and Savior because he's just as much of a pansy? Can't do anything without someone else to come and bail him out, right?" The other lackey chimed in. Oh, Kira wasn't going to let that stand.

"I can take care of myself, just as Kira Yamato can." It wasn't a defensive statement, merely simple fact.

"Hah, did you hear that? He thinks that horrible pilot can defend himself. The guy doesn't even know how to properly use a gun! What, does he think begging for peace is going to get people to stop?" On a scale of one to ten for ignorance, this guy was a pretty high eight at least. Looks like Kyle was going to have to break out the snark.

"I'm sorry? Have we been watching the same show? Kira never begged for his opponent to stop fighting. In fact, he generally only ever talked to someone during a battle when someone else contacted him first. Plus, while he didn't know how to really use a gun during the first series, due to not needing to know, he did learn how to by the second series." Again, no defensiveness in his tone, just neutral tone as he stated simple fact.

The other Zeon cosplayer spoke up again, the "leader" still silent.

"Well, look at who's so smart. Doesn't change the fact that all he could do was beamspam once he got the Freedom. He's a lousy pilot." Kira could only shake his head at the ignorance.

"So, he's a bad pilot for using the Freedom as it was designed for?" When the guy looked confused, Kyle elaborated, "It's quite obvious from the four mounted guns and the beam rifle that his second suit was designed for mid to long range fire support to back up the Justice's close range ability. The fact that it has high specs and beam sabers for close range combat doesn't change that. Could he have ignored the guns and just butchered everything with those beam sabers, quite possibly, but he wouldn't have been making very effective use of his MS, now would he?"

The astonished look on the guys face said that he had never even considered that. The leader was frowning now. Finally, he decided to step up to the plate himself.

"Okay, so you obviously know Cosmic Era Gundam. Now I want to see what you know of the Universal Century Gundam. What was the prototype superweapon deployed at the Battle of Loum, but wasn't supposed to be used due to not actually being part of the battle plan?"

"The QCX-76A Jormungand, named after the serpent from Norse mythology." Kyle snapped out without any delay or hesitation.

"What are the three units designed to support the Gundam ?" The man interrogated.

"The FXA-00 Flying Armor, the FXA-05D G-Defenser and the FXA-08R Mega Rider." His loop memories didn't fail him, as his unawake self really had memorized every last aspect of the Gundam fandom. Yes, his in-loop self was that much of a Gundam nerd. "I not only have models of each and the Gundam that goes with them, but I also have a Gundam set up with its G-Defenser while mounted on a Mega Rider."

"The ace pilot who would always fall into Char's shadow due to his MS color being similar to the Red Comet's?" The man was getting more and more intrigued with each answered question.

"Johnny Ridden, nickname the Crimson Lightning."

"What is the Mobile Weapon designed from the original Gundam that only appeared in a single video game for the PC?"

"The RX-78Opt Gundam G-Dash."

"The first MS in the Universal Century that could make the trip to Jupiter in a week?"

"The F99 Record Breaker. I have three complete models at home." Kyle stated with pride.

"You too? Fine, last question. What are the two MS that the Zanscare Empire had designed near the end of their war that were never put onto the battlefield?"

"The ZMT-S35S Rig Ring and the ZMT-S37S Zanspine. The Rig Ring had a miniature version of the Angel Halo's psychowave system and was canceled due to a change of plans and the Zanspine was to be a testbed for the Empire's Minovsky Drive technology stolen from the League Militaire, but the war ended around the time the prototype was created."

"Alright, so you're not just one of those fans who's only seen the modern Gundam shows." On the leader's face was grudging respect. He still acted like he was swallowing something bitter as he said this next part. "And I suppose if you're truly a fan of UC Gundam but also enjoy CE Gundam, then that's your choice."

He then turned to his cronies. "Come on, boys, we're heading out. There's an Emma Sheen cosplayer I saw a ways back that I want a picture of."

Kira released a breath he didn't realize he was holding. Lacus came up beside him.

"You handled that pretty well."

"Wasn't expecting the impromptu quiz, but yeah, I did alright. The questions were apparently to see if I was a casual Gundam fan or not. When I proved I was just as much of a fan as he was, he lost any desire to try and bully me." Kira replied.

"I know. I've had some fans do that with me before. Not always pleasantly and sometimes they don't learn their lesson." His girlfriend sighed sadly.

"Some people just don't want to learn. I'll consider myself lucky that he did." Kyle shrugged.

"Well, enough dwelling on that. He said something about an Emma Sheen cosplayer, right?" Her eyes said it all.

"You want a photo shoot with her, I'm guessing?" He didn't really need to ask, since he knew the answer. Getting a naughty grin on his face, he took off. "Race you there."

"Hey, no fair getting a headstart!" she shouted as she started running herself.

Kira and Lacus...er, Kyle and Lara...were going through the second day of the convention. Since wearing the same costume from the first day wasn't hygienic, they had two more cosplays to show off before the end of the convention. So, when the second day started, they came in their pilot suits. The "Pilot Lacus" cosplay really drew attention from SEED fanboys. There was a dozen photoshoots in as many minutes. Kyle had some too, but Lara was way more popular due to the rarer cosplay. Handling the photo-ops and such as they came, the couple looked through the stalls for anything new from the previous day. Some new doujinshi were nice, though he avoided any that seemed like it had him and Athrun getting uncomfortably close. There were new kits with some not being from Gundam, like one of GaoGaiGar and another of a Macross Valkyrie.

After the couple had gone through their normal route of stalls, they headed over to the consuite dedicated for convention goers' rest and

feeding. Mostly snacks, but better than going hungry. As much as they loved to buy stuff and interact with other fans, sometimes they just liked to slow down and relax. After all, they had acquired a lot of stuff already and their duffels were getting kind of heavy.

"Hey, Kyle?" Lara asked out of the blue.

"What is it?" He responded easily.

"How have you dealt with the times you couldn't be a pacifist? When you just couldn't convince someone with words, instead having to fight." His girlfriend seemed sad, most likely recalling her time as Jeanne again.

Kira paused, taking a few moments to think. Then, he gave her his answer.

"There's a statement I've read a long time ago that addressed that. It went as such...Human beings only have two ways to deal with one another: reason and force. If you want me to do something for you, you have a choice of either convincing me via argument or forcing me to do your bidding under threat of force. Every human interaction falls into one of those two categories without exception; reason or force, that's it."

He didn't look at her as he said this. Instead, he just focused on talking. "That's how it was in our baseline universe. Those we couldn't convince to stand down by our reason, we had to make stand down through force. I wish we didn't have to rely on force to make our point, but some people just aren't willing to listen. When that happens, when words fail, to protect my friends, I will pick up the sword and fight. It's all about knowing, when to draw your sword."

They sat there, unspeaking in the hustle and bustle of the convention around them. Lacus then spoke.

"I understand. During my time as an Umbra Witch, I didn't have the choice of using Reason. The fighting between Paradiso and Inferno

was far too gone for that, thus Force was my only option. Yet, in a way, that was a comfort as it meant I wasn't doing it of my own will. However, I hesitate for the day where I must make the conscious choice of taking a life when Reason could have prevailed."

Kira was all too aware. There were plenty of branches in Yggdrasil and many did not allow a truly pacifistic person to thrive. At best, they could get others to protect them, but that wasn't always an option either. It was always the worst for Kira, when Reason failed and thus he had to pull the trigger and end a life. She feared the time she would have to stain her hands red of her own accord.

He remembered Mu La Flaga telling him that it got easier while Andrew Waltfeld said that it never got easier. From Kira's experience, they were both correct. The more he fought, the easier it was to pull the trigger again. However, each time the trigger pull ended a life, he felt the same sorrow just as sharply. Letting his shoulders sag, Kira gave an answer that she didn't like, but it was one she had to consider just the same.

"As much as I don't like you getting into such situations, I can't protect you 100% at all times. When the times comes, the thing you will have to consider is, which is more important to you, your principles or your survival. Because, you can only have both when you have the control."

Again, they fell to silence and thought. After a few moments, however, Lara slid up against him and held on. In response, he pulled her onto his lap and hugged her in turn. Sometimes, having the time to stop and think was as much of a blessing as it was a curse.

So, after showing up in their Finale dress and their pilot suits, it was time for the final day of this convention and the pair showed up in casual clothes. Well, the the casual clothes they wore when they first met in the baseline. Kira in his black shirt that had rather odd and nearly pointless buckles and Lacus in the dress from when she was rescued from her escape pod. In other words, their iconic casual

clothes. This actually seemed to get them the most fans wanting to photograph them.

With their remaining funds, they made one last sweep of the convention's stalls. Mostly there was nothing new, since the people who had the stalls wanted to sell off as much as they could before the end of the convention. Kira found a model kit he missed the first time through, a rare Beginning 30 Gundam. Lacus found someone who still had some SEED plushies. Without anything left in the stalls to occupy them, they set out to fill as much of their cameras' memory cards as they could with the dwindling hours. They found Gundam cosplayers of all kinds willing to take pictures with them. Heck, they even managed one where a cosplayer of every main character was present.

However, it couldn't last and soon enough, Kyle and Lara had to leave. As the crowd slowly slipped away around them, the lovers held hands while carrying their now very burdened duffel bags. Once they were sure no one was looking, they quickly stashed the bags away in their subspace pockets. Not that they stopped holding hands.

"That was a wonderful convention, Kira. It's too bad Flay missed out." Lacus stated as they walked along.

"Hopefully, she'll be here the next time we visit the hub. Still, she's going to blush when we show her the doujinshi we found." Kira commented in turn.

"That one we found which had the three of us together makes me blush. I found it tastefully done...and gave me a few ideas for when we next meet up with Flay." The pink haired songstress informed her boyfriend. He just shook his head.

"Say, Kira. Even though I'm here, you really miss Flay, don't you? And when you're with Flay but I'm not there, you miss me a lot too, right?" She looked up at the vibrant night sky as they headed home.

"Of course. There is no doubt. I'll always worry and miss you both when neither of you is by my side. I love you both too much not to." He admitted it without reservation.

"I know, Kira. I can feel that love inside you...Just as you can feel my love inside me and her love inside her." It was only after coming to the Hub and being a Gundam fan that Kira found out about that strange telepathic/empathic power he awoke after Mu's supposed death in baseline. Newtype, the name given to humans who developed greater awareness and the ability to connect their hearts to others. That was the bond he had established with Lacus and Flay...and due to being a Gundam fan, he'd also seen exactly what can happen when one part of that bond dies.

He shuddered, causing Lacus to look at him with worry. Their minds connected, allowing Lacus to see what troubled him. Upon seeing his fear that Flay and Lacus may suffer the same fate as other Newtypes who have bonded, she swiftly pulled him into a hug. It was rare that they used that power in public, but right now, they didn't care. If someone was able to sense them doing it, so what? They weren't going to hide from each other when one of them was suffering.

Several moments passed before they separated, physically and mentally. Kira smiled down at his shorter girlfriend, who smiled in turn. Satisfied that the fear had passed for now, they continued walking. After a few blocks, Lacus suddenly spoke up.

"Hey, Kira. I know it won't really help to allay your fear...but what if we did some things for if such an event were to happen?"

"Er...what?"

"It was just something that came to me. Like, a series of video wills based on the thing that happened."

"What brought this on all of a sudden?"

"...I'm scared of our bond being severed and hurting you, Kira. I may not even be there with you when it happens… If there's anything I could do to prepare for such an occurrence ahead of time..."

Kira stopped walking to stare down at her. She stared right back with eyes shining with sadness at the possibility and determination to have some plan in place for it. Seeing that, he decided to place his trust in her idea. He just hoped that there was never going be a use for it...but knowing the loops, there's always the chance.

Hub Loop : Yes, Lacus does wear a pilot suit in the show. It was mostly shades of pink and she didn't really pilot, she just sat in the cockpit of the Infinite Justice, Athrun's newest Gundam, as Kira's Strike Freedom pulled it through the atmosphere...though she did then direct it to land in the Archangel...so she can do basics, at least.

More snippet comments to come.

Skullgirls Fused Loop

Gundam SEED/Skullgirls

Kira Woke up to a place he hadn't in awhile. He found himself in a medical bay, though a much different one from the Archangel's. There was an IV drip and heart monitor off to one side to complete the image of a healing patient. When he tried to move, he found his body very heavy. It wasn't in the tired or injured sense, but in the weighed down sense. Blinking his eyes in the rather dim light compared to his memories of the Archangel's medical bay, he lifted his head enough to check himself over.

What he saw was definitely different than anything in his baseline. Instead of bandages for his injuries, his entire body was covered in some kind of organic metal. It wasn't like armor, but more like a second skin...at least, that was his guess from the sensation of touch he felt as he lay there. After a moment, he decided to check his loop memories to see how he got into this state.

The first part was fairly standard for him, being a student and lab assistant at a college where he worked on a human-sized powered frame with his friends. However, first difference was that it wasn't in a space colony like he was used to, but on Earth, while the second was the name of his professor. It wasn't Professor Kato, it was Dr. Avian. One day, while he and his friends were working on the powered frame in the lab, the building shook with explosions. The next thing Kira remembered, he was drifting in and out of consciousness while occasionally catching glimpses of Dr. Avian standing over him and trying to assure Kira that he'd be alright.

So, that was it. He was finally fully awake after that incident. As he managed to get himself into a sitting position, the door to the medical bay opened and a very odd sight threw open his bed's curtain. It was a young girl wearing a top hat with a matching dress, though that

wasn't the strange part. She had thick razor sharp metal teeth and thin metal arms with large mechanical eyes attached to them. Also, she was grinning quite maniacally.

"Hey there, buddy. Are you feeling Loopy today?"

"I only just Woke up," Kira replied with a standard Looper greeting. So, this girl was also a Looper...good to know. "What about you, miss?"

"Ha, I'm always Loopy! Me and the whole gang! Say hi, everyone!" Suddenly, she was surrounded by several cartoony...things. There was: a bird sticking out of her top hat, dressed like she was, an anvil with a face, human arms with boxing gloves and matching legs, a weight with a more human face than the anvil's, with very bulky arms and stubby legs, and a pair of bombs with arms and legs too, though one was the size of a grenade while the other was bigger than the girl. "I'm Peacock! Who are you?"

"Kira Yamato," he replied. After that, he slowly turned his body so he could put his feet on the floor. She seemed kind of confused as she watched him shift over. Seeing that, he said, "I'm not used to this body yet, it seems. It's much heavier than my normal one."

"I'm sorry you had to find out this way, Kira." The eyes of the young man on the bed bugged out. It was Dr. Avian. "My job as professor at the college was mostly to look for candidates for the Anti-Skullgirls Lab. You and your friends showed great promise with that powered frame. It could have been a revolution in fighting Skullgirls. Sadly, you were the only one in any savable condition and the prototype went missing."

Well, that was certainly different. Shaking his head, Kira inquired about the changes to his body.

"It was a miracle you were able to survive as long as you did, but the damage was too great to fix by mere surgery. So, I decided to resort

to an experimental Parasite. By the fact that you're still alive, I'd have to say the process succeeded."

Kira moved a stiff and weighty arm, before quipping, "Mostly."

That seemed to set Peacock off, as she started laughing.

"Hey everyone! Meet the newest misfit of our happy family, Kira! He's a bit Loopy, but don't hold that against him," Patricia "Peacock" Watson declared as she entered the main room first. He and Dr. Avian came in a few seconds later. The kind, but eccentric, doctor had gotten him something like a walker to help support him as he got used to his heavy body while still allowing him to move under his own power to deal with the stiffness. Patricia most likely added that last bit for anyone who was also a looper.

Once he was close enough to the gathered people, Kira was introduced to the rest of the people from Anti-Skullgirls Lab 8. First there was Big Band, a startlingly tall man in a modified trench coat with instrument parts attached to his back and sides. Next was Ileum, a woman in a mask and modified patient's outfit whose limbs looked more like intestines than skinless muscle...there were also a pair of drills coming out of her shoulders. Hive and Leduc were introduced after Ileum, a pinkish-haired girl in a bee themed dress and a young blonde man with mechanical limbs respectively. Finally, there were kids here flocking around Ileum, looking like something out of a horror movie.

After introductions were out of the way, most everyone went back to doing whatever they had been previous to his introduction. However, Big Band stayed behind with Patricia.

"So, you're a looper like us? Sorry for your introduction to our universe. Surviving a near death experience is never fun," the much larger man said in condolence.

"Thank you, Mr. Birdland." Even after so many loops, Kira tended to be formal during initial meetings with someone new.

"Just call me Ben, or Big Band if you want. It's been a long time since I've been called Mr.," Ben "Big Band" Birdland said as he lifted his face away from his breather for a moment.

"Yeah yeah, Band Camp. He hears ya. Let's talk about something something more important. Like the capabilities of that suit you was making." Patricia said impatiently.

"The prototype powered frame? It wasn't finished when the explosions happened and Dr. Avian said it had gone missing afterwards," Kira replied while taking the time to try and stretch the stiffness out of his limbs. Due to the heaviness of them, he wasn't able to do much.

"Unfortunately, we know exactly where it disappeared to. Those explosions were only a diversion so the Medici Mafia could take it without interference," Big Band stated to the new Parasite host.

"What?! Damn it!" Kira looked like he was barely restraining his fury. "They damaged the college, killed my friends and almost killed me to get their hands on an unfinished prototype?!"

"Well, it's not like we have to worry about actually facing it, cause we're loopers, but a heads up on what to watch out for would be nice," Patricia stated flippantly. Kira took a deep breath.

"Like I said, it's unfinished. I was responsible for programming the operating system to run the damn thing, which was only about 93% complete before this happened. It wasn't actually designed for fighting Skullgirls, but it would have been easily repurposed to do so. Once the exoframe was completed, it'd have allowed a man to lift a hundred times his normal limit at least and been equipped with hard points for carrying tools and such."

"Typical college project to do good in the world, twisted to only cause suffering," Big Band said with a shake of his head. "Sounds like the Medici alright. They mass-produce something like that, they could name their price on the black market."

"Oooo, sounds like it's going to be a blast to fight! I can't wait!" Peacock stated with unbridled glee.

"Well, you're going to have to. They'll most likely finish it with whatever personal touches they want before seeing about mass-production. We have time enough for Kira here to adjust to his Parasite and learn to fight with it."

That sounded agreeable to the young man the Medici family harmed in more ways than one. He wasn't one for revenge, but get his blood boiling and even his usual pacifistic nature won't save you. The Medici were going down...HARD!

Several days had passed since Big Band informed Kira of what really happened that day. Kira's first priority was mastering his Parasite, which wasn't easy even for the Ultimate Coordinator. Well, in this world, he was technically a normal person so he didn't have his normal strength and durability. Most of the time he was awake went to moving his limbs as much as possible to exercise the muscles that supported the Parasite and work out the stiffness. Suddenly having your skin replaced with metal, albeit flexible, organic metal, wasn't something to just shrug off. He was actually amazed his body could handle the vastly increased load so well, but then chalked it up to the Parasite doing more than just replace his skin.

Big Band encouraged him to slow down, since overworking his body in too short a time was detrimental. That and speed isn't the be-all end-all of a battle. He even used himself as an example, with his mechanical body being very slow in most cases but his body was durable enough that he can take the hits to get into the right position to take his opponent. Kira could see his point, but the young man

was used to fighting fast battles, so speed was a big component of his style. Still, if he had to adjust to being slower, he would. For now, he just wanted to reach a more normal human speed.

Much to Kira's surprise, after about a week of adjusting to his new body, he found it much easier to move. While he was still very heavy, the stiffness was completely gone. So while he was still slower than normal, it wasn't because of lack of range of motion. Now, Kira changed his training...he was fighting the Anti-Skullgirl weapons. A rather big step, admittedly, but now that he could move properly, he wanted to see what his new body could really do.

Patricia insisted on going first against Kira. While her crazy cartoon antics put him off balance during the fight, Kira's organic metal skin proved a strong defense against most of her arsenal. However, for the young man, it was a failing stalemate as he wasn't able to get closer while she kept her distance with her cartoony projectiles and assistants. Not to mention, she had a short range teleport ability for when he did get close to deal some damage. In fact, she had just disappeared into the hole in the floor now.

Reacting quickly, even if his heavy body slowed his actual turning down, he whipped his hand back to try and intercept Peacock. In doing so, he made his first real hit of the fight...and Peacock showed off more of her cartoony antics. The blow caused her head to spin around really fast for a few seconds before she deliberately brought her hands up and slammed them in place to stop it. He was sure if she actually had eyes in her head, they'd have been spinning around in their sockets like old cartoons did. The expression on her face was most telling, a strange mix of shock and awe.

"I'm sorry! Were you hurt at all?" Kira immediately dropped out of combat mode after seeing what happened. While he hoped it was just her, he didn't want to think he could have killed someone so easily with a backhand like that. He was only going for a quick stun he could capitalize on, not outright murder his opponent.

"I'm fine, but wow. I've never had the opportunity to experience that." Then she returned to her normal manic grin. "Now I just need to learn how to projectile vomit and I'll be able to recreate the Exorcist!"

After that, she said she'd wait a bit before fighting him again. So, Big Band stepped up to see what the rookie was made of. Kira knew that this fight was going to be tough. His opponent had a lot of experience being slow and durable, on top of having larger mass than Kira did. Kira's main advantage was the fact that his mass was more compact than Big Band's was, as his pneumatic weaponry was hollow. This meant Kira put more mass into a smaller area of impact, even if he didn't have nearly as much as Ben did. However, he was also aware that the whole "size doesn't matter" belief is ignorant. Even a slight difference in mass can make the difference in a body to body fight and unfortunately, Ben Birdland's advantage there was huge.

Kira knew how to fight in his normal body. In fact, he had been learning every martial art in his universe he could find. Partly out of boredom and partly out of strengthening himself to shore up the holes in his skills. That's also why he's taken rigorous gun training with Natarle and other trained military people he knew. However, none of that mattered against these people made to fight the Skullgirls as he refused to pull out a gun in a fight like this, not that he thought it'd help even if he did, and his martial arts training was all about taking down normal sized humans, not mechanical behemoths like Ben was. Well, that was a lack he'll correct as soon as possible.

Most likely, Big Band was also sizing him up for this fight. Peacock sat off to one side, a bowl of popcorn on her lap. The silent stare-down stretched out for a few more seconds before the fight started. Big Band activated the musical devices on his back to bull rush Kira. Said young man jumped to one side to dodge the oncoming massive man. It didn't matter to the one man band as he had gotten into close range.

What followed next left Kira really glad he had his Parasite now, since he was sure a normal person would have been utterly destroyed by the older Anti-Skullgirl Weapon on the first hit. As it was, the long string of instrument based weapons were knocking him around like he was a rag doll. He started to dodge them, but not nearly fast enough as most of the attacks had enough speed and range themselves that he'd at least be clipped. Faster, he had to get faster!

Big Band then trapped him inside a giant bell, ringing it to stun the younger man. When he pulled the bell off, Kira was holding his head in his hands. While the new Parasite Host staggered from the punishing sound waves, the bigger man brought an arm out...A giant, instrument-based pneumatic arm. With the massive fist bearing down on him and his body still trying to shrug off the effects of that bell trap, he was sure the hit would knock him out. When his body moved out of the way on its own accord, Kira was rightly confused. Big Band merely smirked under his breather.

Recovering his senses, Kira looked down at his body and discovered flared protuberances along his arms, legs, chest and back. They were largest on his back, reminding him of a Mobile Suit's thrusters. Did that mean, these things were comparable to vernier thrusters? He tested this, sending a mental command to the larger ones on his back and finding himself lifted off the ground. It took some getting used to, but Kira decided he was fine with this much.

"Finally got your Parasite adapting to you. That's good. Now, the true fight starts." Big Band took his fighting stance once more with Kira taking his own. This time, however, there wasn't any worry or hesitation in his movement. Sure, it was because he suddenly got a way back into his comfort zone, but he could work on that later. For now, he wanted to see what his new body could really do.

"So what's the problem here?" Patricia said while puffing away on one of the cigars she pulled out of nowhere. Kira heard she did that in baseline too, so it wasn't from her subspace pocket. The young

man dismissed it as it wasn't really important at the moment. It did mean he wasn't able to barter with her regarding the cigars he picked up in Rapture, which was a shame.

"Just because he's capable of fighting on an even level with our baseline doesn't mean he'll join your Medici murder sprees," Big Band replied in a tone that spoke of just how often she did that.

"Why not? He has legitimate beef with them, just like I do." So that was Kira's current predicament. Peacock thought he was good enough for now and wanted to take the fight to the Medici Mafia. On the one hand, he didn't like to kill due to his general pacifistic beliefs and attitude. On the other hand, the Medici made it personal by killing his friends and almost killing him to get their hands on the prototype powered frame they had been working on. This, on top of all their other atrocities Big Band and Peacock have informed him of.

With that in the front of his mind, he was considering just letting himself go along with Patricia's plan. There was a time and place for sheathing your sword...dealing with remorseless criminals was not one of those. Kira was fine with just knocking the mooks around on his way to the head honchos, while Peacock did her thing.

"Just killing people tangentially related to the guys responsible for the death of my friends and theft of my powered frame isn't me." Peacock frowned in disappointment while Kira was sure Big Band had a smirk under his breather. "However, taking down the people in charge...I would happily oblige."

Patricia's grin returned while Ben just shook his head.

"Fine, we hit the Medici. Not really a workout, especially since they're small potatoes compared to the Skullgirl, but why not? I have some beef with them too," the old cop turned Anti-Skullgirl Weapon said with his variation of a shrug.

Kira had to admit, this loop was actually kind of fun. Sure, he didn't really like fighting on principle, but this was kind of cathartic. Peacock started off the current operation, storming the local casino the Medici used as an HQ, by driving her "Bandwagon" through the front door. Though he had no idea why she shouted "Republican Car! YEAH!" when she smashed her way in. He looked at Ben when that happened, who only shook his head.

After that, he and Big Band zipped in with their respective propulsion features and bowled over the guards and bouncers that appeared to take them down. Against the mechanical nature of Ben and his own organic metal skin, their guns were highly ineffective. Kira actually found it kind of pathetic that this was so easy. Even in his baseline, with how skilled he was as a pilot, he was still facing weaponry that could damage or even destroy his MS if they hit with them. Now, he was throwing around mafia thugs and there was nothing they could do about it.

Well, there was that Cerebella girl who showed up to stop them. She refused to listen when Kira asked why she was working for such bad people. So, he had to fight her. Thankfully, he wasn't distracted by any of the normal thugs as Big Band and Peacock dealt with them. He was going to defeat her quickly, but the Living Weapon on her head, Vice Versa, was ridiculously strong. Still, he wasn't weak by any stretch of the imagination.

As he found out while training to bring out his Parasite's potential, he couldn't use his "thrusters" while wearing anything that covered them up, though he could retract them when he didn't need them. This left him with very little he could wear when he wanted to fight. So, he wore swim trunks and that's it. He was embarrassed to do so, but practicality was the more important issue. Peacock thought it'd be funny if he just went without anything, but Big Band vetoed that suggestion.

Cerebella was very quick on her feet, even with those huge muscular arms that were part of her hat. Said arms apparently were also at least equal, if not greater, in strength to Big Band. However, unlike

Ben, she was well within the size he had trained his martial arts skills to fight, though the extra arms on her head threw him off for a few moments. Dodge left, deflect a blow, dodge right, deflect again, another dodge right...Kira saw his opening.

He grabbed the muscular arm and pulled. Cerebella stumbled forward and her hat came off. Kira then threw the Living Weapon behind him into the wreckage of the casino's slot machines. Without Vice Versa's big arms to keep him at a distance, Cerebella found herself outmatched by the ASG Weapon before her. She tried to use her higher agility and acrobatic skill to keep away from her foe until she could get around him to her weapon, but his thrusters allowed him to cut her off at each turn. Finally, he managed to catch her by a leg and used that to whip her around before slamming her into the ground hard. That was the last straw; she fainted.

By that time, Big Band and Peacock had already dealt with the remaining goons. So, now it was on to the boss in charge of this operation. However, they found the higher floors were empty of everything. Only outlines remained of where furniture and pictures used to be. Seems like they had been forewarned somehow and had moved everything days ago. But that couldn't be. How could they have known?

So, Kira, Patricia and Ben were just standing around in the emptied room, wondering what to do next.

"Well, I can't say I've seen this variant before," Peacock declared after a few quiet moments. This was the first time Kira had seen her display actual confusion.

"So, now what? We don't have a clue we can use to find where they went," Kira said after that.

"Not quite. There's always some clue, kids. All this furniture and finery didn't just disappear into thin air. Considering everything out of the public eye has been taken away, it would have taken a lot of time

and effort to haul it all away...especially since no one downstairs acted like anything was different. So, they must have used a backdoor or the like to hide the move." Kira and Patricia looked up at the imposing figure of Big Band. It was sometimes difficult to remember that the veteran ASG Weapon had originally been a street cop who inspected crime scenes and the like.

"So what," Peacock huffed. "All those goons were toasted and the acrobatic bimbo's probably long gone by now."

"That may be. However, of all the places we looked, did we see anything that would lead to an exit other than the front door?" he asked somewhat rhetorically. Indeed, they hadn't.

"So, there's a possible secret door somewhere in all of these empty rooms?" Kira asked the former cop.

"No possibly about it. In fact, I wouldn't be surprised if there was an elevator big enough to hold large loads," Ben stated with his shrug variant.

"I'd complain about this sudden and unexpectedly smart move, but this is just an interesting new challenge," Peacock said with her own shrug. Kira wondered just how often a big variant loop came by if this kind of thing was unusual to his fellow loopers.

"So, we just have to find a place where a hidden entrance would most likely be and bust it open?" the young man asked. Peacock grinned at him.

"Kira, I like the way you think. You heard him, gang! Let's wreck the place!" With that declaration, her cartoony imaginary friends appeared and started running around tearing holes in the walls. About a minute later, Tommy Ten-Tons shouted, "Boss, I found it!"

Indeed, there was an elevator large enough that it could probably hold and support a pair of African bull elephants. After a moment, the

three ASG Weapons looked at each other before stepping on. Time to see where this ride went with them.

After riding it down to the lowest possible floor, they found themselves in a mostly empty loading area. They stood on an elevated platform for loading and unloading big trailers and trucks. There was a pair of figures standing in the middle of the area, perfect for fighting in.

"This sucks," a male voice said. "There's not a beautiful woman among the lot. I guess that means no new trophies today."

"Why do you even want trophies?! I'm the only woman you need!" a female voice replied with lots of jealousy in her tone. The ASG trio looked at the pair. The man wore a mostly red suit with some black and white checker patterns on his legs and chest with a matching feathered hat, while the woman had no arms and looked like a cross between a puppet and a violin.

Patricia frowned with an annoyed glare at the two facing them down.

"That's just great. Taliesin and his Remote Parasite, Muse. These f***ers are Medici leg breakers like Cerebella, that girl with the muscular cap you beat, Kira. He also has the job of hunting down any of his 'friends' who break contract with the Medici." Then her face got vicious. "Not to mention his use of the Medici slave trade to collect any woman he considers beautiful and then, use his power to turn people into instruments."

Considering how angry she was getting, Kira and Big Band suspected that he had tried to take her or Marie as an instrument at least once during Peacock's time looping. Kira then put a hand on her shoulder and said, "Have at him. I'll even help if you want."

She grinned with that viciousness still intact. "Thanks for the offer, but this waste of life is on my shit list. There won't be much of him left when I'm through."

With a bellow of rage, she leapt down from the platform and rushed the duo. The pair was immediately put on the defensive, trying to push back the one girl tide and failing miserably. While they were obviously experienced and fighting with a two on one advantage, Peacock had been looping for a long time and wasn't in the mood to hold back. Mere seconds later, a massive explosion echoed the mostly empty loading area and the duo fell. However, the guy wasn't completely dead yet...after all, he could probably tell them what they wanted to know, the location of his boss.

"Tell me where your boss is!" An angry Peacock was a terrifying sight to behold. Kira made a mental note to try and avoid getting on her bad side.

"*hack* H...he's at the te-tempor...ary HQ...*couch* Do-n't know...exact loca-tion. I-i-it's in the...red...light...district." And then he fell unconscious. Without treatment, his injuries would definitely be fatal shortly.

"Well, we have a clue at least. Wonder why it's so roundabout this loop." Peacock huffed as her companions joined her.

"Perhaps because this loop, the River King Casino and the Medici Tower are the same location? Can't say that happens too often," Ben commented with a shrug. "Anyway, since we have a vague location to go on, let's get to looking."

Kira didn't really like being in this place. Red Light Districts were something he avoided at least on principle. Not to mention Flay and Lacus wouldn't approve. Still, if he and his current friends in the ASG Weapons had to look through here to find the HQ, then so be it. But, that didn't help them actually find the darn thing. And no, they weren't going along with Peacock's plan to just level the whole place until they find what they're looking for.

So, would they have to check every building to see which had the most Medici in it to figure out which is the HQ? Nope, because

Peacock and Big Band happened to come across Riccardo, a Medici thug they had experience with...though Patricia only just recalled the face of a man she's murdered countless times over her looping. Fortunately, Big Band was the one to interrogate the guy...for a certain value of fortune. By the time Ben Birdland was finished with him, Riccardo needed new pants and a shower. Patricia was very impressed as she watched every second.

Well, they had their destination, but Kira learned that it was unexpected for his friends...once again. The name of the nightclub they had to raid was called the Bastet's Den, owned and run by Eliza. When he asked, the native loopers told him about her, an ancient Parasite host who drank blood to retain her youth and beauty...that and she was a huge hedonist with something of a god complex. She played herself off as something of an altruist with a charity blood drive, but that was just a facade so she could keep the blood for herself. In other words, someone who Kira didn't want to show mercy to.

After bouncing the bouncers, they found themselves in the main lounge.

"So Ben, you're sure you can trust the information that guy gave?" Kira asked, uncertain about information given under threat of force. Eliza was on the stage, singing to her crowd...and abruptly cut off upon noticing her newest arrivals. This caused the patrons to turn and stare at what drew her attention away from singing. They all stood up, pulling out various guns.

"Pretty sure," came the deadpan reply. Of course, against the three ASG Weapons, they were as useful as throwing wet toilet paper. When the bullets stopped flying, the trio split up to plow through the mafia thugs.

As bodies started flying around, Eliza dropped her act and attacked the closest ASG Weapon. This turned out to be Big Band. He grunted from the impact, but threw her off the next moment. Peacock saw this happen and frowned...she had wanted to fight Eliza, not

deal with crowd control again. Then she went back to fulfilling her Medici murder promise to Marie. Kira was fine dealing with the grunts, doing his best to hold his strength and weight back so he wasn't just punching through their bodies. He really hated to fight brutally like that.

Still, since dealing with the normal thugs wasn't a big deal with the pair of loopers, they tried to pay more attention to the fight between the veteran of Lab 8 and the narcissistic vampire wannabe. Kira was left somewhat in awe, only returning to his senses and continuing to fight the thugs because a couple of them swung at him with steel pipes. The old cop may have had a big slow body, but during a battle, his attacks flowed together like a song only Ben Birdland could hear. The bloodsucker was a good fighter, there was no arguing that, but just like Taliesin facing Peacock, she was vastly outclassed and only survived as long as she did through fighting defensively.

She used her own blood for fighting, using it to extend her range as well as making things to attack with. While this gave her more range and mobility, Big Band was able to power through most of it without flinching to deliver his own blows. Her style had experience from her long life, but she never fought like the veteran of two Skullgirls had to. She preferred her life of decadence over keeping her fighting skills sharp, as her narcissistic god complex made her assume she couldn't be beaten anyway. In the end, the One Man Band broke her beyond her ability to recover.

Also around this time, the thugs stopped flowing in...well, wasn't that convenient. Deciding not to question it, Kira approached Ben while Peacock debated with herself and her gang if they should go over and finish off the Medici thugs Kira didn't. They eventually determined that they wouldn't, if only because there was no fun in killing an unconscious target. Ignoring her, the other two ASG Weapons talked.

"Now that we've dealt with the welcoming committee, where is the head honcho?" The younger man asked as he looked around.

"Since this building isn't tall like the normal HQ, that means he'd have to be in the other direction," Big Band stated as he looked down at the floor. Kira got the meaning shortly afterwards.

"Since we can't go up, then we go down," the non-native looper declared. Peacock perked up as she heard that.

"Oh oh oh! Let me, let me!" Kira and Big Band looked over at the excited girl ASG Weapon. They both had a sense of dread creep over them as she held up a hand and caused it to form into a drill...somehow. "Mine is the drill that will pierce the Medici!"

"PEACOCK...DRILL...BREAKERRRRRRRRRR!" She leaped into the air and brought her new hand drill down on the floor, boring through it like a hot knife through butter...and she didn't stop at the floor immediately below it...or the one after that...How far down did this place go? Well, at least they didn't have to search for a hidden entrance again.

Big Band dropped down the hole after Peacock, Kira riding on his shoulder. Eventually, he stopped at the bottom floor, which also had a hole in it, but didn't have any light coming out of it like the other holes. As they landed, the Medici thugs woke up from their apparently stunned state of seeing someone with a large drill for a hand burrow passed them and attack the pair. Yeah, they didn't stand a chance. After some time of knocking the mafia members around, a heavy and distinctive thudding noise reached Kira and Big Band's ears.

They looked around for a moment, since they couldn't immediately tell where the sound was coming from. As it got closer, and thus more distinct, they stared at each other as realization set in for both of them. A door at the far end of the room was blown open to reveal a sight both familiar and unknown to Kira. Immediately, he recognized it as the prototype powered frame he and his friends were working on, but he also spotted the differences too.

It was a full body armored suit with a mostly boxy frame, though more complete than he last saw it with a chest plate and face covering. The arms were cylindrical with a bulkier section near the elbows for dealing with weight pressure. That was as far the familiarity went as it was overhauled for combat, though it was obvious to Kira's trained eyes that the people who worked on the suit weren't nearly as skilled or knowledgeable of what they were doing as his friends were. The normal hands had been replaced by fists with hardened metal spikes on the fingers and a custom ring of guns braced against the bulky arm parts. More threatening was a tube over each shoulder that connected directly to a massive backpack via covered ammo belts. Finally, there was a high caliber assault rifle mounted on custom holsters for each leg.

Overall, it seemed threatening and could do a lot of damage judging by the weaponry, but it also looked like it was very slapdash and amateurish. Like they only had enough understanding to make it work, but not how to properly balance the design. This definitely screamed of compensating for something as well. However, unlike the small arms the ordinary mooks had carried, this looked like military grade stuff and thus was likely able to hurt hurt the One Man Band and the Parasite user. After this moment of analysis, the man behind the armored plating opened fire with the arm mounted guns.

Kira immediately dodged right using his thrusters, while Big Band boosted left. At this time, what remaining Medici mooks still retained consciousness decided they didn't want to be in the line of fire and ran for it. Some of them weren't lucky enough as the stolen armor turned to fire at the younger ASG Weapon and got riddled with anti-material rounds. Kira was shocked by such blatant disregard for the lives of his opponent's comrades. Thankfully, it wasn't just him fighting as Big Band slammed a giant fist into the distracted backside of his stolen powered frame.

Despite the immense power of the blow, the armored suit was only knocked a bit off balance. As the guy compensated to straighten out again, he made an impressive leap away from the much taller

cyborg. When he landed, he switched tactics from firing the guns to shooting RPGs from the tubes on his shoulders. Again, Kira was left horrified by the man's lack of regard for the lives of his fellows as the Medici members he and Big Band had knocked out were now being blown to bits from his missed shots. The horror and building rage was then subsumed as another, very familiar sensation took hold.

Kira was very familiar with this state of mind; his activated SEED Factor. The Superior Evolution Element Destined Factor: a controversial and still unproven theory in the Cosmic Era regarding the continuation of Humanity's evolution. As the young Coordinator has experienced, activating his SEED allows increased physical and mental ability, such as faster reflexes and increased informational processing. However, Andrew Waltfeld compared the state to the Berserkers, who were feared on the battlefield for their rage...but while Kira had been terrified of the change initially, he found it was actually the opposite of those ancient warriors. SEED Mode gave him increased control over his mind and body instead of decreasing it. Still, he was only able to initially access this ability in battle while tensions were high and survival became paramount.

With the sudden calm that forced the distracting emotions down, Kira began plotting out exactly how to counter and defeat the armored foe in front of him. Even as he started into motion, he took control of his Parasite and caused it to once more adapt to his current need. He felt the "thrusters" on his back start to expand and mutate until they were a reasonable facsimile of his Strike Gundam's Aile Striker Pack, complete with a pair of handles sticking out near his shoulders. As he moved, Kira reached back and grabbed them. With almost unnatural ease and grace, he pulled them free and into a crossed formation in front of him as the replica of his Gundam's beam sabers sprouted into thin double edged blades about three and a half feet long.

The mutated thrusters activated and pushed him forward, even as the armored form loosed more rockets at the Parasite host. With the explosives heading towards him, Kira's reflexes took over and

caused him to swipe at them with his blades. Said RPGs fell to the ground as useless pieces of scrap as he passed, causing the armored form to revert back to using his guns. Unimpressed, the swordsman rapidly repositioned his blades to deflect the incoming fire. Once he was close enough, the stolen armor stopped firing and attempted to go at it with the hardened spikes on his fists. However, due to its overall weight and unrefined controls, the machine was too slow for the oncoming Parasite user.

The blades flashed and the metal was cut away from its pilot as the weapons were based on the Armor Schneider combat knife technology of his Strike Gundam. That is to say, the swords he created from his Parasite are vibroblades and thus had greatly increased cutting power. From his memories of the powered frame and his SEED Mode, Kira effortlessly sliced the armor to pieces while still leaving the pilot unharmed… mostly. Despite the death of his friends and his desire for payback, he didn't want to kill the man if he was just the pilot and not actually related to the events that led to it being stolen. Still, it wasn't pleasant for the man inside as his vibrating blades created sparks as they cut...Painful, but survivable.

As Kira found a now very frightened man stuck in the scrap of his stolen powered frame, his mind became aware of another battle taking place on the other side of the room while his SEED Factor deactivated. There was Big Band, currently fighting against a very fancy dressed woman with a black veil over her face...and her right arm had been replaced by some kind of giant gun. He couldn't tell if it was a grenade launcher or some massive shotgun. Well, whatever the case, Big Band seemed like he was taking care of it just fine. In the meantime, he had some interrogation to do.

Big Band's battle with the veiled cyborg woman did not last much longer as Kira finished his interrogation of the thug formerly wearing armor he and his friends had so painstakingly worked at before their death. After knocking the guy out once he was done spilling what he knew, the Parasite host turned to stare at the mess of metal plates

and circuits that was the remains of the armor. Since it wasn't all that different from the baseline build, he could remake it as much as he wanted, but due to his in-loop memories, he doubted he'd work on it anytime soon. Having something associated with the death of your friends could do that.

Anyway, the woman Big Band identified as Black Dahlia during their battle collapsed onto the ground after taking one last punch from the former cop. However, before she fell to sweet oblivion, she taunted the pair by saying that while the Medici's have been decimated by their antics this day, the family head had already escaped...and that her informants inside the ASG labs has already dealt with Lab 8. Kira was visibly stunned at the revelation, while Big Band only sighed.

"Of course the Lab was attacked while the three of us were away. Apparently that's not going to change even in a variant fused loop." The younger ASG Weapon looked at him with surprise and confusion. "Sorry, we had been more focused on getting you trained than telling you of the events to come. That said, it's rare when there's more than just damage to the labs computers and such. Generally, the only casuality is Dr. Avian...and maybe I've become too used to the times I can't save him."

"That's an unnerving thought. How often do we have to go through our baseline loops before we can shrug off even the most horrid things that happen inside them?" Kira said in response.

Before Big Band could reply, a cartoony hand popped out of the hole Peacock drilled earlier and grab on to the edge of the hole. Peacock pulled herself up, covered in dirt and and looking a bit disoriented. There was also a large sack in her other hand...it was far bigger than she was. How did she carry it up while she was climbing?

"Hey guys," she started cheerfully before noticing the mayhem that their battles caused. "Whoa, what'd I miss?"

"Nothing important," Big Band stated somewhat sarcastically. "What's in the bag?"

"I hit pay dirt down there!" Patricia whooped with a laugh. Setting the sack on the ground, she showed off its contents...a metric crapton of gemstones. Ben Birdland sighed and Kira looked confused, as they were all apparently precut in various styles unless she also took her time to do that as well. Patricia noticed the reactions and responded somewhat confusedly, "What?"

"Did they come out of the ground like that?" Big Band asked.

"Yeah...why do you ask?" Patricia questioned innocently. Despite her homicidal tendencies, her cartoony reality warping and her time spent as a looper, she was still a young girl without much of a normal education. Ben Birdland knew from experience that Patricia and homework did not mix without something exploding along the way.

"Because gems and ores aren't supposed to come out of the ground already processed," Kira answered as he picked up and inspect the various crystals. "Especially quality ones like these, not a single flaw among them. Normally, they need cleaning up, refinement, cutting and polishing."

"Well, that just saves me time then," Peacock answered flippantly. Why should she care if she broke the normal laws of reality? If it worked, then what was the problem. Ben and Kira just mentally threw up their hands and let it go.

Well, Big Band informed her that the mafia don had escaped and that the lab had been attacked just like in baseline. That caused her to stand straight up with an angry frown when she had been in the middle of picking up her sack. And there was that side to her, the serious and vicious side that comes out when people she cares about are harmed. She let the sack lay there as she turned to leave.

"I've lost interest in the gems now. You guys can split those things for all I care. I just want to break those traitors in half with my bare hands." With that declaration, she ran off. Big Band then walked towards the hole in the floor, since it was right under the hole in the ceilings above it.

"I have no interest in petty sparkles like those. You can have them. Either way, we should be going too. There's still some unfinished business this loop." In the process of talking, he turned his legs into a series of large rocket thrusters. Kira quickly stashed the bag in his pocket, not really interested in jewels himself, but he didn't want to waste them either. Still, the light-hearted mood that had been there was gone now as Kira climbed onto the larger guy's shoulders.

Time to go confront the Skullgirl.

With all the Medici thugs having either been dealt with or fled the battle, heading towards the Grand Cathedral where they were going to find the last fights of the Loop. Along the way, Ben and Patricia talked about the foes they'd be facing. One of which, the traitor responsible for the attack on Lab 8, wasn't a Looper and thus would go down very easily, while the other was a Loop Aware...thing...that acted as a nun for the Trinity. With the confused and curious look Kira gave him, Ben explained about how the Trinity created the Skullheart that was responsible for the creation of Skullgirls and how they wanted to destroy the world for some reason. Well, it probably extended beyond just this world, since they were actual deities, but good luck figuring them out.

Finally, there was the current Skullgirl herself, Marie. Patricia's old friend who is also a Looper, but wasn't awake this loop. Peacock told Kira in no uncertain terms that she would be taking her down, as she wouldn't forgive anyone else for harming her friend. Kira was a bit blindsided by this, but shrugged it off a moment later. If she wanted to end her friend's misery personally, it was her choice.

Eventually, they reached the Grand Cathedral. Kira spent a couple moments staring up at the impressive sight. However, he got a really bad feeling about this place. When he noticed that his companions hadn't stopped when he had, Kira chased after them. As he entered, he noticed the interior and its solemn atmosphere. If he wasn't getting such a nasty feeling about this place, he would have stopped to appreciate the architecture and stained glass windows. When he

came astride of his friends, he noticed two figures staring them down.

One looked like a sexified nurse with her shirt open to expose cleavage and a very short skirt. She also wore a surgeon's mask and carried a bone saw on the small of her back. The other...was a nun. Most likely, this was that Double thing he was told about. She had her eyes closed and a blank look on her face. However, even as he watched her, that horrid feeling seemed to increase. What was going on here?

"So, you have finally arrived," the nun stated as her eyes opened to reveal pure red eyes with nothing else in them. "I take it that nothing more needs to be said?"

When the trio across from her and the nurse nodded, Double's body rippled. While Peacock and Big Band were long used to seeing her shapeshifting abilities, Kira had to run through some mental exercises to avoid vomiting. By the time her body stopped raping the laws of physics to change shape, she now looked like a darker colored him. Kira had to blink a bit to process what he was seeing. The hair was an almost black shade of brown and the eyes were a very dark violet, but there was no doubt that she was mimicking him. However, what threw him off the most was the violent grin on the face.

As if on some unspoken signal, the nurse charged towards Big Band and Peacock. However, Kira wasn't able to watch that fight as his apparent doppelganger charged him in the same moment. He braced himself and met the charge head-on. It pushed him back a bit, but he countered by grappling the arms and slamming it into the nearby pews. As it recovered, he formed his Aile imitation and use the increased thrust for his own charge. This was combined with the collapsible swords that he had used on the stolen armored frame.

Much to his surprise, he was countered by a pair of those exact same swords now being wielded by his opponent. Sparks flew from the clash of the vibrating blades as they tried to cut each other. Kira

grit his teeth from the exertion while the thing in front of him kept that same vicious grin. As if to compound his problems, that feeling he's been having since first seeing this cathedral was as strong as ever. And then it got worse.

Look at you, Mr. High and Mighty Ultimate Coordinator. The young man lost concentration for a moment. That was his own voice talking down to him...though it didn't sound right. He was positive he had never sounded sadistic before. *A boy with his super powerful Mobile Suits fighting entire wars on his own and winning. Always trying to take the moral high ground by only shooting to disable rather than kill, but how many others die anyway? How many have died because their suits were too damaged for them to evade the fire of someone else or how many have died because destroying weaponry and engines on a battleship blew up those sections?*

With him so distracted, the copy of him pushed him back. Even as he shook his head to clear it and get back into the fight, the voice continued taunting him about the kill count he may have acquired even as he was only intending to disable his targets. However, where was this voice coming from? It was in his head...did his opponent have some kind of telepathy? That's when it hit Kira; his opponent was copying more than just his current body's abilities.

So that's it. You're in my head because you copied my mental abilities too. He telepathically shot at his doppelganger, whose grin just widened.

I underestimated your mental fortitude a bit. You've already come to terms with the fact that you will kill, even if you don't mean to, when you fight in those wars in your baseline. I'm disappointed now. That's such an easy way to break pacifists and I find it won't work on you. Pity. As the voice in his head continued, it slowly changed from his to the feminine one of the thing he was fighting before it turned into him.

Now knowing that his opponent was trying to play mind games with him, Kira resorted to something he usually only reserved for when he

wanted to hide his mind during a baseline run. There are plenty of benefits to looping into Hogwarts, including Occlumency. He hadn't really known much about that telepathic ability he had gained during the battle against Rau, but Harry helped him gain better control and a way to shield himself from others with similar powers. Looked like he was going to implement that tactic here.

As his mind cleared and his emotions stilled, the feeling of dread ebbed and the familiar sense of the SEED Factor took its place. The doppelganger got a somewhat confused look on its face as the contact severed. Then, his Parasite changed its setup. The bigger thrusters on his back returned to normal; being replaced by a blocky shoulder armor with some kind of triangular spike sticking out and a very long sword attached to the other side around the shoulder blade. This was a replica of his Sword Striker Pack. As such, he grabbed the hilt hanging over his shoulder and pulled the sword free.

With the change in setup came a change in tactics. Just like with his other facsimile sabers, the beam that the weapon was supposed to have is replaced by a solid blade. Kira took full advantage of his bigger sword's superior range over the ones Double was mimicking, as he didn't have all that big a drop in agility compared to the doppelganger's Aile setup. Double may have had the exact same skills and powers that he did, but without the mind connection his Newtype abilities allowed, it wasn't quick enough to adapt as he switched his sword style as rapidly as she could identify and start countering.

At this point, the only reason it hadn't gone down yet was due to the Aile form's superior agility, but that wasn't as much of an asset when facing a slightly slower opponent in an enclosed area. After managing to push him back to obtain some breathing room, Double contemplated just switching to her true form now to fight this foreign looper. As she thought this, Kira grabbed the spike on his shoulder and pulled it off to reveal its nature as the counterpart of his Sword Strike's beam boomerang. It formed a solid metal blade as its owner

geared up to throw it, appearing like a discus of death when it left his hand and soared through the air.

In the middle of dodging it, Double realized the trap. Taking advantage of the drop in the doppelganger's guard, Kira struck the area it was dodging to. Thanks to mimicking his current organic metal body, the slash didn't cut through it, but the impact stunned Double long enough that the boomerang came back and slammed into its back. With the guard further broken, Kira plunged the blade into the thing's torso and into the ground. Again, the only thing that prevented a fatal wound was the super tough skin of Kira's copied form.

By this time, the two other ASG Weapons had beaten the traitor from another lab and were watching the results of his battle. After recovering his blade, Kira headed over to his fellow loopers while thinking he had won. He was mistaken as he heard a disgusting sound come from behind him since his downed opponent decided to switch tactics as well. Gone was a darker duplicate of himself and instead stood a roughly human sized tower of rippling flesh with eyes and mouths in places they weren't supposed to be.

"Looks disgusting, right?" Big Band spoke up without much worry. After all, he and Peacock have seen this form of Double countless times before and beaten it. "Well, she's the last obstacle on the way to the Skullgirl. You and I can take a break afterwards."

Taking a deep breath before nodding to the veteran ASG Weapon, Kira pushed past his revulsion from staring at the Eldritch thing in front of him and taking his fighting stance. Beside him, Peacock flicked away a cigar as she took her own stance with the usual cheeky grin. Big Band's grin was hidden by his breather, but he showed his eagerness for the fight just the same.

Time for Round 2!

Kira could honestly say that the true form of Double was the most disgusting thing he's ever seen; a rolling tower of flesh about as tall as Big Band was with mouths and eyes in moving locations. Not to mention, it moved by reaching tentacles out and dragging itself along the ground. Still, it was three loopers on one loop aware...thing. Well, he's been told that Double is as powerful as her masters want her to be...perhaps this is going to be easy...or painful.

Peacock led off on the pair, charging the abomination with her trademark manic grin. That's when Kira saw part of Double's normal fighting style. After all, if you could change shape at will, why limit yourself to just one style? His friend's cartoonish antics were countered by Double rapidly shifting between various other people and using their skills. One that he spotted was Cerebella and that arm hat of hers. Still, Peacock's experience and zanny attacks kept up rather well with the distorted fleshy thing.

Then Big Band launched himself into the melee and Kira could only watch in fascination. It was quite obvious that they were experienced fighters that trusted each other, their attacks flowing together far beyond anything else the young man had seen in combat. They also left very few openings for counterattack with Big Band's arsenal of instrument weapons filling the gaps in the cartoony blows of Peacock. If he admitted it to himself, Kira felt like a third wheel. What could he add to their flow that wouldn't mess it up?

As he wondered this, Double took advantage of an opening to knock the pair back a bit. That's when he got an idea. He smirked a little bit, since it won't be the first time he's been relegated to fire support. With that thought, his Parasite changed once more. Gone was sword and boomerang and in their place was a rather massive cannon mounted on his left scapula and on his right shoulder was an armored section with a small gatling gun and a pair of holes. With the imitation of his Launcher Striker Pack ready, his gatling spewed bullets into the lull of the battle.

The bullets weren't really big enough to do her major harm, but it did cause Double to take a more defensive form for a moment. The

foreign looper then showed off what the holes were for as a pair of rocket propelled grenades slammed into the abomination before him. Peacock whistled appreciatively while Big Band just smirked under his breather before the pair shot forwards again to lay on the beatdown. With that setup, it was actually a wonder that Double was able to continue to put up a lasting fight. Regardless of who she became or what appendages she created, the three loopers countered with their combined fury.

After one particular counter Double tried, Kira shouted for his friends to move as he brought the cannon to bear under his arm. Peacock and Big Band took one look in his direction before clearing ground zero. Even with his legs bracing as well as they could, his body still slid back several feet when he pulled the trigger. While he couldn't yet imitate the particle beams of his home loop, the speed at which his projectile moved meant Double barely had time to take a defensive form before it was struck head on. The resulting explosion pretty much brought the cathedral down on everyone.

The three Anti Skullgirl Weapons made it through the attack just fine with Kira's and Big Band's bodies being more than tough enough to weather the collapsing debris. As they climbed out of the rubble, with Big Band having shielded the younger ASG Weapon, Kira looked sheepish while Peacock grinned at him.

"See, I knew you had it in you! That was awesome!" She and her gang were holding up score cards, with the lowest being an eight point eight from Lonesome Lenny.

"It was an impressive attack, but now we've got to dig up the entrance to the underground mausoleum where the Skullgirl awaits," Big Band stated, causing Peacock to sag under the thought of all that work. However, after a moment, she looked at Lenny and frowned at his score card.

"Bomb's away!" Despite how big Lenny was, the young girl turned cartoon punted him into the general direction of the entrance while lighting him in the process. After a few moments of his fuse hissing,

he went boom and a strong explosion blew away the debris. Kira just shook his head while the toony girl was berated by the veteran for that stunt. She mostly just waved it away since it cleared their path without any hard labor on their part.

Despite the light mood that Peacock set as they headed down the revealed stairs, Kira was able to tell that she was forcing it. This made sense to him, as he knew that her friend Marie was the Skullgirl. He never wanted to fight any of his friends, either. It wasn't a good feeling, especially if the confrontation could have been avoided. Shaking himself out of his thoughts, Kira looked around at the burial site while they descended.

It definitely felt like a mausoleum, cold and dead. There were bones everywhere along the ground, providing a disturbing crunch sound as they were trampled under their feet. A bluish glow emanating from a young girl in a maid costume, surrounded by three giant, demonic skulls, who sent cackling energy branching everywhere and providing illumination into the underground. To complete the creepy scene, all the alcoves in this mausoleum were filled with glowing eyes. Kira was unnerved by the whole display, but then, he wasn't used to eldritch abominations either.

He and Ben Birdland watched Patricia converse with the undead maid. Apparently, their conversation was the usual unawake baseline version. Turned out, Marie had a strong enough strength of will that she resisted the Skullheart enough so that she only went after the Medici and their associates, since they were responsible for what happened to her and Patricia. However, she was reaching the point where the Skullheart was taking over and Patricia wasn't going to let her end up like that.

As it happened, despite the fact that she was not Awake, Marie was still a powerful foe. She drew on the bones around her to form her attacks, causing swarms of skulls to fly around and making the dead rise up as her servants. Peacock wasn't fighting with all her looper potential, so they were pretty much even. Heck, Big Band even

pointed out that Marie hadn't even reached the strongest she gets for baseline. Kira was shocked, considering the power they were throwing around already.

Oddly, Peacock wasn't acting like her typical self. She was fighting with a seriousness that wasn't there even against the true form of Double. Sure, her usual grin was still apparent, but her attacks were a lot less cartoony than before...her bullets weren't random projectiles and her gang didn't do their normal slapstick antics. Then, it hit Kira...she respected Marie and wanted her death to be an honest one. In Patricia's mind, Marie deserved no less.

"So, you realized it." Kira looked up at Big Band when he spoke. "Patricia loves Marie. She'll do anything for the looping one. Heck, she'll hold a grudge against anyone who harmed her. Well, only one exception to that and she'll still be very bitter about it, if both she and Marie weren't awake during that particular loop. That is why, this is a mercy kill."

They watched as the friends countered each other's moves and rapidly escalate the fight. Peacock's grin slowly closed and Marie gradually became more and more skeletal. Eventually, the young girl dressed as a maid discarded having a humanoid form entirely, as skeletal remains circled around a skull lit with blue fire. It seemed that Peacock was waiting for this.

"ARGUS!" The Anti-Skullgirl Weapon split open her hat and what looked like a robotic peacock head popped out. Was that Avery's true form? Either way, Kira could tell. This represented the true nature she hid behind the cartoonish antics...Patricia's nature as a Weapon. "AGONY!"

The robotic bird head opened its beak and launched a powerful stream of compressed energy, piercing through her opponent. This was followed up by her converting her arms into rows of eyes behind her; like a peacock's tail. Said eyes then flashed before raining a heavy barrage of similarly compressed blasts of energy into her possessed friend. As if to save itself, the skull that had been at the

center of Marie's final form separated from her body and tried to flee. Marie's body reassembled itself, but the damage was done and it was starting to disintegrate into green flames.

With the skull, most likely the Skullheart, trying to flee, Big Band picked up Kira to his surprise.

"Go get it, kid! End the Skullheart!" With a mighty heave, the younger ASG Weapon was hurled towards the fleeing target. As he flew through the air, his mind set on the task now given him. He switched from his Launcher state to his Sword state and pulled the massive blade from its rest.

" **Even if you destroy me here, I will merely come back!** " The Skullheart declared as it continued trying to flee. " **I will find another girl who will foolishly wish to satisfy a desire in her heart. The cycle will start over and the world will burn for it!** "

"Every time you rise, another will step up to stop you! It may not be one of us, but for all the impurities in the human heart, there will always be someone willing to stand up and fight for peace!" Kira readied his swing, "ANTI!"

The long blade began its descent onto the eldritch artifact. "SKULLHEART!"

It began to glow a pure white before slashing straight through the fiery skull. "SWOOOOOOOOOORD!"

Kira cleaved through the corrupting abomination as he passed by. The energy of his weapon clashed with that of the Skullheart until it went up in an explosion he could feel on his back. Flaring his thrusters to land safely, Kira then turned around to watch Patricia's last words with her unawake friend. She promised that she would complete Marie's vengeance on the Medici family. Then, the Skullgirl's body finally disappeared into the green flames consuming it.

They all left the catacombs without a word after that. Patricia seemed like she was trying to hide the sadness she felt in killing her with her typical manic grin. The other two ASG Weapons merely followed behind her to give her space. Eventually, once they were far away from the remains of the cathedral, she turned around to face them.

"So, now that we have destroyed the SkullHeart, what do you want to do next?" Patricia directed that at Kira.

"Well, I don't know when this loop ends for you guys, but the Medici are still around. I don't want to leave them alone, with all the trouble they'll cause." Yeah, that's Kira for you. If he thinks he can do something to help, he will… Within reason, of course.

"If you two kids are going, then I suppose I have to play the responsible one and keep an eye on you." Ben stated with a shrug.

"That's settled then!" Patricia declared with a clap. "Until the end of the loop, we're on a Medici hunt!"

Kira and Ben just looked at each other and shrugged. Too much effort fighting her on that one. As they started walking again, the veteran decided to ask Kira.

"So, have you decided on a name for your Parasite yet?"

Kira didn't respond for a few moments. After all, he hadn't given it much thought during training nor during this adventure. Still, with how it had saved his life and assisted him in his battles, it deserved at least that much. The pair with him paused so they could hear his answer. He smiled at them.

"Liberty. Her name will be Liberty."

Chapter 7

5.1) Gundam SEED/Final Fantasy Unlimited

Mu La Flaga Woke Up rather confused. He was covered in a black cloak over mostly black other clothes...but the main thing was a dull golden colored thing on his right arm which prevented him from using that hand for anything. He also wasn't getting much from his loop memories, mostly hazy snippets that he couldn't make out quite right. It was a bit different than his time as Neo Roanoke, but close enough that he could see similarities too. The person he replaced must have had amnesia.

Well, this was going to be a pain. Still, while he didn't have the memories to guide him, he could feel great instinct driving him towards a goal...but what was the goal? What was he trying to remember?

He heard a disturbance nearby. Looking towards it, he saw a giant mushroom thing in the middle of a big cloud of dust. It seemed to be attacking someone...who could apparently handle themselves from how it just got sent flying by some kind of toss. However, it got up after landing, turning into some kind of monstrous humanoid form.

Chaos! Wait, who just spoke into his head?

A servant of Chaos, Unlimited! A different voice, but he still couldn't make out a gender.

Hurry, Unlimited! Slay the fragment of destruction! A third voice...what was going on here? However, the voices didn't like that creature and neither did he. So, he rushed in that direction. Soon, he found himself at the edge of a cliff, staring up at the giant humanoid fungus.

Call IT forth, Unlimited! The winds of judgment that stir the Soil! The Magun! Soil? Magun? He looked down at the thing on his arm, a light now glowing within a section of the dull gold length. Words came instinctively to his lips.

"It has moved." He was a pilot, so trusting his instinct was second nature by now. So, he let what his body remembers guide him. "SOIL, is my power!"

He brought his arm up to his chest, as a large trio of blades popped out of a different mechanism and started spinning. It was drawing in some kind of power from the surrounding atmosphere. After a few moments, the blades retracted and he instinctively extended his arm out as the device started glowing across its entire length. Then, it broke into little pieces and reassembled itself into a big triangular gun with three barrels...and a black beating heart in a glass ball near his arm over the pistol grip. Finally, a small cylindrical segment with three covered gaps finished forming the weapon and the energy gathering stopped.

Now heed us, Unlimited! Call upon our power once more to slay the fragment of Chaos! It's not like Mu La Flaga had any choice at this point. He listened to these voices that seemed to know him.

Caring Love

Primordial Flame

Living Spirit

The words that came to him conveyed some deep meaning that his body understood as it reached down and plucked a strange glass bullet full of some kind of colored sand.

"The origin of all things, Mother Black."

With a deft flick, it sailed towards the openings in the cylinder, now uncovered. It slid in without issue, causing the cover over that hole to

close again. He then picked up another one.

"A heat that will scorch all creation, Fire Red."

Another flick and it was sent into the next hole. The cover closed over that one too.

"And finally, the critical point of everything, Burning Gold."

With the last "bullet" in place and covered, the black heart of his weapon started beating like crazy. The golden gun in his hand hummed with incredible power.

"Burn up! I summon you, PHOENIX!"

He pulled the trigger. With the roar of a mighty explosion, a huge billow of smoke exited the barrel. However, the smoke started twisting and out of this plume came three streams of brightly colored substance matching the three "bullets" he put in. They spiraled around each other in a triple helix, which soon smashed into the humanoid thing in front of him.

The thing put up an arm to block the shot; impacting with some force, but didn't otherwise affect the creature. It then looked at the nub at the end for a moment. Seeing it did seemingly nothing, it then struck a pose like it was mocking his effort. However, shortly after it did so, its body started twitching and struggling uncontrollably. Then, its torso rapidly bloated up and its body turned red from the inside. He could hear its cries of pain as whatever was happening coursed through its form.

Then, with a mighty explosion of intense heat, it went up in a gigantic fireball. Out of this eruption came a massive bird of burning flame and red crystal. It sang a beautiful cry before turning into an arrow of flame and zipping into the sky. Oddly, it then CRASHED through the sky like it was a glass ceiling, which then rapidly reassembled itself. Well, that was fascinating to watch.

He glanced over at the people the thing had been attacking. They stood in complete awe of his victory. So, seeing as they were his own source of information, he started towards them. Perhaps they had a clue as to what he had to do in this loop.

5.2

"Hey, Mu." Kira asked one loop. "I have a question."

"Okay, go ahead." All current Gundam SEED loopers were Awake and had worked to get all of the people who make problems during baseline into a single area together where they can't escape. Then Flay dropped in with her Umbran Armor from the Bayonetta baseline and start chasing them around.

"I'm pretty sure you wouldn't actually remember, but how did you survive your Strike being hit by a Lohengrin shot? It's an Anti-Fortress weapon."

"Well, there's your answer...I'm not a fortress!" He then started laughing his head off while everyone else there just gave him a deadpan stare.

5.3

"Er, Kira...Why do you have a monkey's tail?" Mu La Flaga asked as he stared at the brown furred tail waving about in the air.

"Oh, this? I was a Saiyan in the Dragon Ball Loops early on. It wasn't near the beginning, unfortunately. That cut at least a couple decades off my time in the loop, but they did teach me a lot about controlling my Ki and the Saiyan transformations. I think I've pretty much mastered them by now, even the additional stages." Kira explained.

Mu blinked, "Additional stages?"

He had a Hub loop at one point, so he had all sorts of knowledge of loop baselines, including Dragon Ball. Did Kira mean the modified versions of the first stage?

"Yeah. You know how there's the 'Ascended' and 'Ultra' stages of the first Super Saiyan form, right? Well, it turns out that those stages can be applied to any of the Super Saiyan levels. They can be completely mastered too, like the Full Power stage. It's amazing what you can do with some experimentation," the Anchor answered excitedly.

"That's nice and all, but that still doesn't explain why it's out in this loop."

"Right, sorry. I decided that I wouldn't be piloting a Mobile Suit in this loop."

Some more blinking, "Wait, you're going to fight Mobile Suits by hand? I realize Mobile Suits aren't going to cut it against a Saiyan, but the size difference just makes it seem weird."

Suddenly, the alarm started blaring.

"All hands, level one battlestations!"

"That's my cue. I'm just messing around this loop, so let's see the kind of reactions I'm going to get from the crew."

Mu already knew how everyone was going to react. Kira sprinted out the now open catapult deck faster than the engineers could follow, and then leap into the air. Just as he planned, there was a full moon out in the daytime sky. Staring at it, he felt the transformation take hold. As he started expanding, his hurriedly sent his clothes into his subspace pocket. By the time he had landed on the ground, he was now a sixty-ish foot tall ape with thick brown fur. Everyone, the Archangel's crew and the ZAFT's desert forces could only stare at what happened and think...

*WHAT THE F***?*

5.4) Gundam SEED/Hellsing-The Crimson F**ker strikes again

This was going to be an interesting loop for Kira. He and the crew of the Archangel, no other Awake loopers among them, took the place of Pip Bernadotte and his fellow mercenaries in being hired by the Hellsing Organization. Obviously, he was Pip. Sir Integra, the head of said organization as well as master of the crazy, foul mouthed, blood knight vampire looper Alucard...who also goes by The Crimson F**ker on occasion, stepped into the doorway to address him and the mercenaries.

"Listen close. You've all been subcontracted as personal bodyguards for the Hellsing Organization. As you've heard, we deal with special interest targets. Terrorists. Cultists. And individuals who believe themselves to be of...a mystical persuasion." All of his crew started laughing, Kira included though he knew otherwise. You see, he had already gotten the meet and greet with Sir Integra. Still, it was in his baseline memories to act this way, so why not?

"Well, is there anything else we should be informed about the facility?" That seemed something reasonable for him to say based on what he remembered.

"Everything you need to know has already been covered in the briefing-" Sir Integra started, but was abruptly interrupted as a pale man in a red coat and hat suddenly phased through the wall.

"Hey kids, wanna see a dead body?!" And then the "Archangels" started screaming. Kira and Integra could only facepalm.

"STOP SCREAMING!" Integra yelled.

Everyone from the Archangel did so. They looked to their leader, who indicated that they wait here while he has a private meeting with the other two.

"So, he hasn't gone out for a walk yet?" Kira asked Sir Integra as they entered her office.

"No, he hasn't. It makes it especially problematic when he decides to act like the Abridged variant," she answered while sitting down at her desk. Alucard phased through the wall a second later, apparently just showing off.

"I take it you're replacing the French Guy who I don't know the name of OR care about?" Alucard replied indifferently. "Have to warn you, pal, I've never tasted the blood of the Ultimate Coordinator before."

"And you're never going to while I'm Awake," the visiting Anchor answered with grim seriousness.

"Oh, a challenge, is it? This will be a fun loop after all!" The ancient vampire cackled at the response.

"Alucard!" Integra warned. "Seras isn't Awake right now, so he's the only Anchor. If we get sent to Eiken because you couldn't control yourself..."

"I'll be good." Alucard backed down with a wince. Even he wasn't immune to the Punishment of Eiken.

5.5a) Gundam SEED/Sonic the Hedgehog

Once again, Kira Yamato Awoke to being shorter than he was used to. At first, his mind went to him being in another Equestria loop, but this place didn't look right for that. For one thing, the buildings looked like ones from where he came from, if a bit darker and grittier than normal. Secondly, he could see regular humans fighting what looked like some kind of dark, monstrous aliens...Okay, he was going to wait on his in-loop memories for this. Wait for it...wait for it.

He was Shadow the Hedgehog, the final result of Project Shadow. Made by one Dr. Gerald Robotnik as the Ultimate Lifeform, he was

put into cryostasis and launched to Earth when the Space Colony: Ark was raided by a military Spec-Ops group called GUN. He was then discovered and released by Gerald's grandson, Ivo "Eggman" Robotnik to work for him collecting the Chaos Emeralds. After helping stop the cataclysmic descent of the Space Colony with Sonic the Hedgehog, he fell unconscious only to be rediscovered by Rouge the Bat with Amnesia some time later.

After being awakened, he formed a team with Rouge and the robot designed to guard the area he was found in, E-123 Omega. During that time, his team fought with and against several other teams as they hunted down Eggman for one reason or another. At the end of it all, he found out it was all a trick set up by Metal Sonic. He had locked the genius doctor up and took his appearance so he could watch and copy everyone who was running around. Then, using that data, it combined itself with Eggman's fleet and became Metal Overlord. However, he wasn't part of that final battle; just watching from the sidelines with most of the other teams.

Supposedly, Kira...er, Shadow...wasn't supposed to remember much, but he at least had the memories of the previous adventures of this baseline. So, seeing the battle below him raging, he figured that he might as well go and deal with the alien beings. However, before that, there were two things he had to do. First, he sent out the Ping to see if he was alone this loop. He got back a handful of response Pings. Secondly...he was once again an artificially enhanced being...When that settled in, he proceeded to just start banging his head into a nearby tree. It didn't distract from his situation nearly as much as he had hoped.

"Hey, Shadow!...Er, why are you hitting your head against that tree?" Kira turned to look at the voice's origin; a blue hedgehog about his height. He looked confused and concerned, "Did you Wake up from a nightmare or something?"

"I'm feeling especially Loopy today. Apparently I'm your friend's replacement this loop." The Ultimate Lifeform shook his head to clear it before offering a hand. "My actual name is Kira Yamato."

The Fastest Thing Alive gained a look of comprehension as he zipped over and shook the offered hand. "Well, it's good to meet you. I'm Sonic, Sonic the Hedgehog."

Once they let go, "Shadow" turned to look at the city below. "So, what's the deal with this mess?"

"Obviously, it's an invasion, but the aliens behind it had a hand in making the guy you've replaced." Sonic replied as he stepped next to his fellow looper. "You thinking of going down to help?"

"Of course. If I have the power to make a difference, then I should put it to good use." The Ultimate Coordinator turned black and red Hedgehog nodded in response. Sonic started chuckling at him for some reason.

"Man, it's not just your eyes that are different from Shadow's. Your attitude is as far apart as can be." The energetic Anchor stated.

"My eyes?" Kira said with a blink.

"Yeah. His are red. Yours are violet."

"Oh, so I kept my normal eye color...perhaps to help distinguish me from him?" Kira shrugged.

"Possibly. Anyway, you ready to take those aliens down?" Sonic asked with a smirk.

"You bet. It can't be any worse than the wars I face back home." The foreign looper stated. As one, they both shot off towards the city below.

5.5b) Gundam SEED/Sonic the Hedgehog

Shadow...er, Kira...whatever...was finding this rather fun. Sure, he was fighting in another war, but he never had this kind of incredible

speed. There were times he just wanted to see how fast he could go and never stop. Bringing this up to his blue companion got a knowing smirk in return. Anyway, with their speed, cleaning up the Black Arms alien menace from the city was easy. At one point, though, Sonic pointed out that Shadow had used guns during this invasion and his looping friend decided to start a collection of them from across the multiverse. The foreign looper responded with a chuckle and story of a looper native to his branch doing the same thing after she had looped into the Unreal and Tribes branches.

Now, while Kira preferred to disable if he could, against these alien beings, who he's been told by the fellow hedgehog beside him are out to turn humanity into its food source, he gladly picked up weapons to blow them away with. They were threats to humanity at large and he wasn't going to stand for that. That said, he was a bit thrown off by the humans attacking him as well, but Sonic said that happens in baseline too. Shaking his head at that, Kira just did what he could in avoiding harm from the human soldiers while he took down the aliens.

Anyway, after dodging energy beams from orbit, blowing away the vast majority of the Black Arms forces in the city and securing three Chaos Emeralds, eventually the pair were confronted by a giant red and black tubular thing with small wings for its size, mandibles of some kind and a single green eye. The boss alien called it Black Bull...it looked nothing like a bull. These alien designs are weird.

Well, whatever the case, between the two speedy hedgehogs, the Black Arms alien...thing...went down easily. Kira didn't even need to use a weapon. Which was good, since that left more for his Pocket. He was sure Natarle would love some of these. Still, what was up with that design? What kind of world did they come from that caused such an evolution?

Kira brought this up, but Sonic just shrugged. He didn't really know much about the Black Arms other than they wanted to turn Earth into their own private buffet. Still, they had a simple enough plan to deal with them; gather the Chaos Emeralds, get the alien's home asteroid

away from Earth...and then blow it up with the giant cannon on the Space Colony Ark. After being stared at by the visiting looper for a few moments, Sonic waved it off by saying it was Shadow's idea and considering what they wanted to do, Black Arms wasn't receiving any sympathy from him. The Ultimate Coordinator agreed with that statement.

Anyway, they were out of the city now and apparently waiting for the other loopers to show up for introductions. When Kira asked if they should gather here in one place, Sonic assured him that there wasn't anything important happening at this point in the timeline and even if there was, he and his pals had plenty of ways to get there quick. Being asked about why they didn't meet up when he first sent out the ping, the blue hedgehog just stated that he was the closest one nearby and he could get there the fastest. Kira left it at that with a shrug. A few moments later, a blue bi-plane landed on the road nearby and three figures got out.

First was an bipedal orange fox with two tails. Second was a bipedal red echidna with a white patch on his chest and spikes on his knuckles. Finally, a pink female hedgehog in a red dress and carried a large hammer. Wait, only three? Shadow's replacement was positive there was at least one more. That's when it triggered.

He didn't get a whole lot of usage out of it, but Kira kept his Newtype abilities as active as possible for when they did sense something. In his baseline, it only allowed him to sense other Newtypes and he hasn't found a way to expand it yet. Anyway, as he was greeting the new arrivals, he got the jolt of energy that diverted his attention elsewhere. Looking in that direction, he saw a mostly white bat in a black unitard and white boots with heart shaped armor over her chest...and she was carrying a very large, bipedal, red and black robot.

As she got closer, something in the back of his mind told him that she shouldn't look like that. If she was triggering his Newtype senses, then she must be one herself. He then opened his mind and tried to connect to her. To his senses, the world vanished...replaced

by a tunnel of color and stars. Kira was no longer the short, black and red hedgehog Ultimate Lifeform, instead being his normal human form. And on the other side, the white bat had been replaced by a girl about his age with red hair.

"Flay!" He suddenly shouted before running over to her as she landed with the robot. That seemed to surprise the native loopers and shock her as she looked over at him. The bat girl blinked for a moment before realization kicked in and she shot towards Kira.

"Kira!" They caught each other in a happy embrace. Nothing else mattered in the world as the pair let the hug convey how much they had missed each other over the loops they were apart.

"Well," Sonic grinned as he saw the reunion. "That's a pleasant surprise."

5.6) Gundam SEED/MLP:FIM

"Thanks so much for your help." Rarity stated as a white unicorn stallion with a brown mane and violet eyes deftly finished sewing up a base dress. "Holidays are such a busy time for me and having extra hooves lets me get more orders in before the rush is over."

"I'm glad to be of help." The pony called Horizon Dawn, Looper Kira Yamato, answered with a smile. "Actually, I'm happy to assist such a famous master of fashion such as yourself. A few loops ago, I got a very strange variant of my normal baseline. No war between nations...but there was a kind of war nonetheless. The Zealous Appearance Fortune Territory fashion shop seemed very intent on taking me away from the Archangel boutique. Guess that's what happens when I loop in as the Ultimate Fashion Coordinator. It feels good to put the skills I gained there to use."

"Oh, don't get me started." The looping dressmaker huffed. "I've had plenty of loops where a rival shop opens up and tries to annex my boutique! Of course, they're never a problem for me personally, but

I've been told that my unawake self has trouble dealing it while also trying to keep up with her work."

"Understandable." He floated the stand he had been working on over to Rarity for her to decorate while he got a fresh stand to start another dress. "Still, after so much combat, this is very cathartic."

"Indeed, good sir." Some ribbons and jewelry secured to the dress before it was set aside for the next one. "There's very little that makes me happier than bringing out the beauty of my clients."

Speaking of which, the entry bell rang as another customer entered.

5.1) Well, this was kind of fun to write. It's a very obscure anime from the Final Fantasy series, with all kinds of nods if you know what you're looking for. Soil is the power of the Magun. There has been some early hints that Soil is the crystallized remains of the bodies and souls of the dead, still brimming with life force. In the finale, it was implied that the wielder of the Magun could hear the voices of these souls. So, this is just a likely variant on how it happens since there's not much information on what actually goes on.

5.2) The world may never know.

5.3) Outside context problems are always fun.

5.4) Personally, I'm not a fan of Abridged shows. This one was just too funny to pass up.

5.5) Kira's running gag of looping into the spot of an artificial creature strikes again.

5.6) Well, being a Coordinator can mean many things. Ultimate Coordinator even more so.

Chapter 8

6.1a

"What did you want to talk about, Natarle?" Kira asked the second in command of the Archangel and fellow looper. They were in his room so they wouldn't be overheard by anyone who wasn't looping. He was a bit sad that neither Flay nor Lacus looped in.

"I have this idea." Her grin made him a bit uneasy. You know, the kind of grin someone has when they think something is going to be awesome, but is actually very crazy. Yeah, that. "You still have some of those fireworks from the Weasley twins, right? How about you use them on the ZAFT ship this loop?"

Suddenly, Kira was sporting a grin similar to Natarle's.

The setup was simple enough. In baseline, Lacus was rescued from a drifting escape pod and Kira eventually decided to return her to the ZAFT ship that had been chasing them. He had specifically called out for his friend Athrun to do the pickup, especially since they were fiances at the time. After sending her over, Athrun then asked Kira to come back with them since he was a Coordinator. During baseline, Kira refused due to his friends from Heliopolis being on the Archangel...However, this time around, Kira and Natarle had a plan in mind.

As was baseline, when he was escorting Lacus to the hangar bay so he could launch in the Strike, his friend Sai Argyle confronted him about what he was doing and asked for a promise that he'd return. Of course, he gave the promise. Kira gave that promise every time it was asked for in the loops. This time, however, there was going to be a bit of time delay in fulfilling it. It actually worried him that he wasn't going to return immediately, because what would his friends think if they thought he broke that promise?

Shaking that thought out of his head, he hopped into the Strike with Lacus and launched. At this point, Kira was really hoping this was a normal baseline loop and not some subtle variant that was going to surprise him out of nowhere. There was the Aegis, right on time...the cockpit opened up upon demand, there was Athrun. Kira opened his in return, telling Lacus to let her fiance know it was her. She talked and waved as normal for a baseline. Athrun stated confirmation that it was her and then she was sent over to the Aegis.

Nothing unusual happened and then the moment Kira had been worrying about arrived. Athrun called back over to him and asked him to come over to the ZAFT vessel. He let the question hang there for several moments, playing up his appearance of thinking. Well, in truth, it was an answer he didn't really want to give. Even after all this time, he still saw them as friends despite the fact that they haven't started looping yet. Still, for all it pained him, he wasn't just doing this for himself. This would help keep them safe too.

As Kira said the fateful words, he hoped that Natarle had explained the plan to Murrue and Mu...but he doubted it for some reason.

6.2

Kira was currently gaping in shock at the absurdity of the current Loop. All else was baseline, though he really wished Lacus and/or Flay Woke up soon. However, that all changed after taking out the first wave of ZAFT Mobile Suits attacking the Heliopolis colony. He knew that Mobile Weapons had to run on batteries due to the Neutron Jammers interfering with the nuclear reactors that would normally be put into them. However, this just made him want to bang his head against the Phase Shift Armor that covered the Strike.

"Why the heck are all the Mobile Suits running on ALKALINE!?"

6.1b

The transition was a very strange one for Kira. This was the first time he's left the Archangel during the war. After all these loops, he was leaving his friends defenseless...and he didn't particularly like that feeling. Even knowing that he would be returning there soon, it hurt to think that he was betraying his friends even the tiniest little bit. As he was lead away from the hangar bay where the Strike was now residing, he wondered if they'd forgive him for scaring them like this.

Athrun reported to his commander, Rau Le Creuset, with Kira and Lacus in tow. For his part, the Ultimate Coordinator was able to avoid any reactions that would tip off his hate for the blonde haired, masked menace. He even called upon his Occlumency training to keep his mind closed to the Newtype abilities he knew Rau had. Eventually, Athrun finished his report and then Rau told him to take his guests to their new quarters. Even though Kira was sure he gave nothing away, he could feel Rau's eyes on him as he followed his friend.

He and Lacus were given different living spaces, though they were right next to each other. His room had a similarity to his normal room on the Archangel; it had space to walk around in, a single bed and a computer. Since he was alone, he immediately went to the computer and started hacking it. That was one of the main problems with a network linking all the ship's computers together. If you knew how, you could hack anything and since programming was Kira's specialty, hacking into the ZAFT vessel was easy enough.

First thing thing Kira did was bring up the schematics of the ship and started memorizing them. He needed to be able to plot out his escape in an unfamiliar environment. Secondly, he started memorizing the crew list and duty scheduling. Not perfect, but it should give him a rough estimate of where everyone would be when he started the ruckus. For the final piece that will leave this ship dead in the water for awhile, he hastily created a virus to infect the computer systems. It would be easy enough for a normal Coordinator to purge under normal circumstances, but the plan called for some chaos via other methods first.

With all that out of the way, it was time to start that chaos. Kira pulled out the invisibility cloak Harry gave him and disappeared. He left the room, the door opening the only sign of his passing. Time to give the ZAFT forces some out of context problems.

Lacus woke up already on the Vesalius. She was in the room she was usually given after being returned. Before doing anything else, like leaving said room, she checked her loop memories. Much to her surprise, Kira had agreed to go with them to the ZAFT warship when he returned her. When she remembered that, she sent out the Looper Ping and got one response on the ship. She wanted to then connect with Kira, but the thought of Rau Le Creuset intercepting the connection due to having the same ability made her hold off on trying that.

Only a few minutes later, loud bangs and shouts of surprise reached her through the door. Upon opening it, she saw some crewmen running down the hall while being chased by a small dragon made from burning sparks as it breathed small gouts of flame. Now curious, she used the opportunity to run in the direction the crewmen fled from. Along the way, she found more people being harassed by animate fireworks: rockets trailing stars of silver and gold, Catherine Wheels of various colors whirling through the air like flying buzzsaws, huge snakes made of firecrackers slithering through the hallways, little paper tanks that shot out bursts of sparks with thunderous noise every few seconds, cherry bombs that bounced off the walls and multiplied into smaller ones after a few impacts before the original went boom and, as if to add insult to injury, sentient sparklers that were always busy cussing out whoever happened to be nearby while writing graffiti on the walls when no one else was close enough.

The pink haired songstress was doing her best to avoid breaking out into laughter as she nimbly sidestepped all the fireworks she encountered as she headed towards the hanger. With all this ruckus, she couldn't imagine Kira was going to stay onboard and since she

didn't know where he was, she hoped she could meet up with him at the Gundams to jump ship. Inside the cavernous hangar bay, even bigger fireworks caused panic among the personnel. For example, a couple of whales made of sparks like the dragons were flying around while similarly made manticores chased after people near the ground.

Lacus calmly looked over the scene before spotting some familiar brown hair causing the Mobile Suit armaments to disappear. Seeing her target, she leaped over the railing of the hanger balcony she had stood on. Since they were in a zero gravity environment, this wasn't as suicidal as one would think. Anyway, pushing off the wall, the singer headed straight for her love interest. As she neared Kira, he turned around to see who it was and smiled upon seeing her.

Kira held out his hands and caught her once she was close enough. Even without their connection, she knew how happy he was that she Woke up before he left for the Archangel. However, things turned awkward and tensions suddenly jumped up as a confused and angry voice shouted at them over the sound of the fireworks.

"KIRA! LACUS!" That voice belonged to a blue haired, green eyed young man about Kira's age. His name was Athrun Zala, Kira's oldest friend and Lacus's fiance at this point in baseline.

...Oh boy.

6.3

"And you called my designs excessive," Kira commented as he noticed the number of relatively well equipped Striker Packs floating in the Archangel's hanger bay.

"Hey, most of these are very tame in comparison to your Dreadnought Striker," Mu returned as the mechanics were finishing up. The Striker Packs in question all had one main theme in common.

"So, going back to your main shtick of using remote weapons?" There it was. All of the Striker Packs Mu has designed are all based on and equipped with remote weapons from other Gundam loops.

"Yes. I mean, it really is my thing in baseline. I have the Moebius Zero, Exus and Akatsuki to prove it."

"You were borrowing the Akatsuki, you mean?" Kira smirked, since ninety-eight times out of a hundred in his baseline runs, Cagalli demanded its return after the final space battles were over. It was made for her by her father, but she had to stay in ORB to do her job as Chief Representative during that time.

"Yeah, yeah. By the way, has she made any progress on being able to use the Shiranui pack without needing assistance from the computer?" He was honestly curious. It's not everyday that he finds more people who can use Attack Drones from their loops.

"Yeah. I'd say, if she keeps up the current pace, she can reach your level in approximately... twenty-two loops." Kira predicted.

"Did you just make that up on the fly?" Mu questioned his Anchor.

"Possibly. In any case... Do you have extras of these?" Mu rolled his eyes at the interest Kira was showing in the Attack Drone Striker Packs.

6.1c

It was a stare down. Two surprised Loopers on one side, and an emotionally unstable young soldier with a gun on the other. Interestingly enough, the pink haired singer had been in a similar position in baseline...but not this early and not with someone close to her in the line of fire. Could she defuse this situation to the point he'd let them go? Well, turns out, Kira and Lacus didn't have to try.

A Firework Whale sang as it barreled down on the blue haired Coordinator, who hastily pushed off from where he was standing. With that distraction, Kira leaped after his friend on the other side of the war as the whale passed him by. Athrun saw him approach rapidly, but Kira was already upon him as he raised the arm holding his gun to take aim. Deftly, Kira grabbed his wrist and pushed it off to one side as he brought his other hand up to hit his friend in the Solar Plexus with a palm strike. The blue haired Coordinator doubled over with a gasp before falling unconscious.

Lacus and Kira looked at each other for a moment after this, with the brown haired young man not happy he did it. Still, not wanting to leave his friend without an explanation, Kira pulled out a flash drive attached to a neck strap and slid it over his unconscious friend's head. Then, with a heave, sent him towards a balcony and out of the way of the fireworks. With a sigh, Kira looked around at the chaos still ongoing with the spark made creatures and how the few crewmen that remained in the hangar bay were occupied by said creatures.

Without a word, the pink haired singer shot forward to hug her boyfriend. Kira accepted it quickly, giving her a hug in return.

"I should have expected him to come here in all the chaos. Athrun's smart, he wouldn't know how, but he'd know someone would use that as a chance to escape," The Ultimate Coordinator stated sadly.

"Don't worry about it, Kira," Lacus stated as she burrowed her head into his shoulder. "With what was going on, I doubt he was in any state to listen to our explanations. He still sees ZAFT's fight as just for the loss of his mother."

"I know," stated Kira with another sigh. "Still, I just wish he'd start Looping soon. I hate having to fight him during baseline. We may not always see eye to eye on certain issues, but he's still a good person."

"I know, which is why it wasn't an easy choice when I decided that I loved you more than I loved him." They were starting to drift away from the Mobile Suits. "Some day, he'll be by our side once more. Until then, keep being his friend."

With that declaration, their resolve set itself as they started up their next task. Kira had already donned his pilot suit before taking things from the Hanger, so Lacus did a quick change into her own pilot suit from her Pocket. With only the Mobile Suits left to take, Kira took his Strike while Lacus hijacked the Duel. Once they were moving, they pulled the still inactive suits from their docking bays and started towards the exit. Since they didn't want any of the crewmen to die, the pair stopped the rampaging firework monsters before warning the mechanics to flee.

Once they were sure no more people were in danger, Kira raised the Strike's Beam Rifle and blew out the hanger bay door to the outside. The air inside rushed out through the now gaping hole, with the five G-weapons and Rau Le Creuset's personal GINN following soon after.

Tension was high and morale was low for the crew after Kira left. Especially for Sai Argyle, Tolle Koenig, Miriallia Haw, Kuzzey Buskirk and Flay Allster. Flay had Woken up to discover that Kira had basically jumped ship with Lacus Clyne when he took her over to the ZAFT forces vessel. Sai was obviously angry that his friend had apparently broken his promise. For their part, they were at their posts; Kuzzey at the comm station, Sai as part of the Combat Information Center, Miriallia for information relay to the pilots and Tolle in charge of navigation. Flay didn't have a station as of yet.

As they all sat around, contemplating what was going to happen now, the Archangel's sensors picked up something.

"Heat sources detected! Identifying! It's the Duel...and the Strike?!" Sai called out, with the last part in confusion.

"Visuals!" Murrue Ramius demanded from the Captain's seat. She got them a second later, indeed showing the Duel and the Strike...and the fact that they were dragging along the Buster, the Blitz, the Aegis and a GINN.

"Pilot of the Strike, identify yourself!" Miriallia demanded over her comlink to the Mobile Suit.

"Sorry to worry everyone," came the voice of Kira Yamato. His face then appeared on the main screen. Everyone let out the tense breath they had been holding. "Captain, mission accomplished!"

"Mission?" Murrue asked in confusion.

"Er..." Natarle began sheepishly. Murrue looked down at her second in command. "I put him up to this, Captain. He was in a unique position and I considered the risks worth taking. I understand that I should have informed you as soon as I thought of the idea. I take full responsibility and accept my reprimand."

The captain sighed in frustration at her friend's antics. Kira's friends all looked towards the lieutenant, now shifting the blame from Kira to her. Even as she continued looking sheepish for her actions, she knew she could handle them being angry at her. She did, in fact, put him up to it.

Miri did notice that the other pilot hadn't said anything over the commlink yet. "Pilot of the Duel, please identify yourself."

The face that greeted everyone was definitely surprising. "Hello again, everyone. I decided to return with Kira after uncovering evidence of wrongdoing among ZAFT's top brass."

No one expected Lacus Clyne of wanting anything to do with the war, much less pilot a Mobile Suit... that and apparently ZAFT carried around pink pilot suits.

As he expected, Kira was swarmed by his friends in the galley as soon as they were off duty. He graciously allowed Tolle to get him in a headlock while his friends vented their hearts of negative emotion. No doubt Natarle was getting an earful from Murrue right about now too. Flay hung back, since she was supposed to be Sai's fiance at this point in time. This...this really split her. She loved Kira and she wouldn't give that up for anything, but she didn't have it in her anymore to try and break her betrothal with Sai without a decent justification. Well, at least she was still friends with everyone.

Kira eventually got everyone settled down. After getting Tolle off him, he explained as best he could.

"Natarle approached me about the mission shortly before I left on it, so it was rather last minute. Sorry I didn't have time to tell you guys about it." He looked right at Sai when he said the next part. "I fully intended to keep that promise I made...it just wasn't as quickly fulfilled as I wanted it."

"I know that now," Sai returned as he looked a bit down that he ever doubted his friend. "We've been friends since you first arrived in Heliopolis. I should know you better than that."

"You're right, we should have known better," Miri stated with a shake of her head. "I mean, it's not like my nightmares regarding the war are going to come true."

She got many confused and curious looks from everyone present, save her boyfriend Tolle, who she has already told this. Having a sneaking suspicion, Kira then spoke up. "Nightmares? Miri, why didn't you tell us about this?"

Looking rather embarrassed, Miri fidgeted a bit before answering with, "I didn't want anyone else to worry about some dreams that came to me from worrying about the war. You being given a mission to fulfill that caused you to go over to the ZAFT ship instead of immediately returning means it was all a coincidence."

Kira could tell that she didn't actually buy that, like she was mostly trying to convince herself of what she believed reality to be over what her memories were telling her. Briefly, Flay allowed her mind to connect to his and informed him that she'd give the speech. Lacus connected a moment later, saying that she'd join in alongside Natarle and make it a "Girl's Night" to help ease her into it. He gave them mental hugs of thanks before letting the connection slip so he could go back to focusing on the friends in front of him. True to form, Flay declared that Miri needed a Girl's only party to deal with the worry that was causing these nightmares.

This left Kira, Sai, Tolle and Kuzzey to ponder what they were going to do with their off duty time.

6.4

Kira looked from the project he and his friends had been working on in the college on Heliopolis, to his friends who had equally confused looks on their faces.

"Miri?" The violet eyed youth asked.

"Yes, Kira?" His currently Awake friend replied.

"We had been working on a powered frame, right?" The Ultimate Coordinator questioned as he turned back to their project...who was drinking beer.

"Bite my shiny metal ass."

6.5 (Seeker213)

"So Kira what do you need us for?" Mu asked with Flay sitting nearby.

"Well I finally got the special units I asked Anakin to make for me during my last loop, and I want to try them out on ZAFT," Kira answered standing in front of three large tarps that covered whatever may be under them completely.

"Special units?" Flay inquired, "What did you get Anakin to make for you exactly?"

"I think it would be better for me to show you instead," Kira replied as he handed the blond man an IPad with a large grin on his face.

"This is absolutely insane... Let's do it!" Mu finally said after a minute from watching the video, while Flay was trying her hardest not to laugh as she understood what Kira wanted to do with his special units.

"Strongest machine Gundam!" Three voices shouted out simultaneously, which against all logic could be heard echoing in space, as their mobile suit, comprised of a manta ray, falcon, and a liger, finished combining.

"TR" "Y" "ON" "3!" The pilots finished as the now named Tryon 3 Gundam took a pose.

The entirety of the ZAFT forces and almost the entire crew of the Archangel could only stare in shock at the ridiculousness of the three units combining, expect for the remaining Awake loopers as they struggled to hold in their laughter.

(Mattman324)

Universes away, Ryusei Date stopped what he was doing. His machine froze in the middle of the air over its target.

Kyosuke looked over at him. "What?"

Ryusei shook his head in response. "I felt a great disturbance in the Force... as if millions of Eldorans cried out in copyright infringement

and then were suddenly silenced."

Kyosuke stared at him for a few seconds. "...you know that's probably just us, right?"

Ryusei shrugged. "Yeah, probably, but... I fear something terrible has happened." His head tilted. "Or something REALLY awesome that we're missing." He then looked around. "Oh, yeah, we're in the middle of someth- DAITEIOH! PERFECT VICTORYYYYYY!" The mech he was in stopped floating over their enemy and swung down with its sword, crashing straight through. This was followed by a jab-and-slash through the enemy's center. "KANSEN SHOURI! PAHFECTO! DAI! TEI! OOOOH!"

6.1d

Miriallia was still a bit flat-footed after Flay had dragged her off, declaring that it was a Girls Only Night. She wasn't quite certain she had been expecting who else was included in that statement. While she had met and kind of liked Lacus Clyne, she was thrown off by the fact that she was present in the room Flay led her to. After all, the last time she saw those two in the same room, Flay declared that she didn't want any Coordinators getting friendly with her. Then, she had time to recognize the other face in the room...and realize that she was now standing in Natarle Badgiruel's personal room.

If Lacus Clyne being in the same room as Flay Allster and the redhead not flipping out was strange, Miri never thought she'd ever see the Lieutenant and second in command of the Archangel in leisure wear...or drinking from a beer can. The black haired officer was wearing a blue t-shirt and denim shorts as she reclined on her computer desk's chair. Flay surprised her again by sitting down next to Lacus on the single person bed on the opposite side of the room from the computer. And then they hugged...Okay, flat-footed was an understatement by this point. With mouth agape, Miri sputtered for an explanation.

"Well, you see." The Lieutenant started after a deep drink of her beer. "Imagine a computer that takes the form of a tree, specifically the World Tree Yggdrasil. This computer is responsible for keeping the omniverse running smoothly. However, at some point quadrillions of years ago, something damaged Yggdrasil and in order to prevent it from all falling apart, the various parts of the multiverse were put into time loops until such time as it was all repaired. And in order to do that, there has to be people aware of these loops, an Anchor if you will."

Despite how insane this sounded, Miriallia was hanging on every word. If this was true, then did that mean her nightmares was actually a previous time through these loops? That there was not one, but two wars between the Earth Alliance and ZAFT? That Tolle really...she couldn't even bear to think about that. And then there was the time she had dated the ZAFT ace Dearka when he had been taken prisoner before he decided to fight alongside the crew of the Archangel. How was she going to reconcile the two?

On the one hand, the only reasons she gone out with Dearka was due to him not having been the one who killed Tolle, being understanding during that period of time and having fought with them to the end of the first war. On the other hand, she had enjoyed being with him for the relatively short time they had been together. Only reason she had dumped him was the fact that he wanted to go back to ZAFT and re-enlist as a soldier. Oh man, what was she going to do?

"Kira is the Anchor of our branch of Yggdrasil," Natarle's voice snapped Miri out of her reverie. "As such, he will always Awaken during these time loops, while we will only do so occasionally. Other than the four of us here, the only other Looper, as we are called, is Mu La Flaga who isn't Awake this time around. I think I've covered all the basics...any questions?"

Miri just stood there for a few moments, looking utterly dumbfounded. Then her eyes flicked back to the pair on the bed, where Flay was now holding Lacus from behind and burying her

head where the pink haired singer's shoulders met her neck. The fact that said pinkie wasn't fighting the arrangement, though with a small blush on her face to show she even knew it was going on, spoke volumes about the difference between the looping and non-looping versions.

"F-Flay!" Okay, maybe she's a bit more embarrassed by the redhead's antics than she was letting on. "Not in front of everyone!"

The new Looper's jaw dropped once more. Flay pouted, but sullenly let go and moved to sit on the edge of the bed next to Lacus. If the black haired Lieutenant even cared, she didn't show it. Seeing her shocked expression, Lacus started explaining about the connection she shared with Flay...and Kira.

Athrun Zala woke up feeling a pain in his chest that he hadn't felt in awhile. The Solar Plexus was easy enough to defend if you knew the attack was coming, but when you don't...How the heck did Kira manage to surprise him that badly? Where the heck had he even produced fireworks capable of autonomous movement, for that matter? Why had Lacus fled the ship that was searching for her?!

All these questions and more swam through his mind, with no immediate answers to settle them. He quickly ignored the pain as the door slid open, making him finally realize where he was. The young soldier was in the medical bay, wearing a hospital gown.

"You're awake now. Good," the doctor who had just entered the room stated good-naturedly. "Of all the injuries I had to deal with after that bedlam, you were only one who had something other than burns. Must have hurt pretty bad, but there's no signs of permanent harm. Anyway, you should be fit enough to return to duty. A clean uniform and your personal effects are in the basket, whenever you're ready to leave."

The doctor left again, perhaps to report something or just to allow him privacy? Athrun shook his head. He needed to get back to work.

As he grabbed the bin where the clean clothes were, he noticed one of the personal effects on top and paused again. It was a flash drive with a neck strap, which he was positive he didn't have at the time he was knocked out. Did Kira leave this on him?

Quickly dressing in his red Elite uniform, Athrun retreated to his room for privacy. Whatever this was, it had better be worth it. If it was a virus...but Kira wasn't like that! He also wasn't a pilot, a fighter, a saboteur...Had the blue haired Coordinator really misjudged what his friend was capable of so badly?

Shaking his head once more, Athrun plugged the flash drive into his room's personal computer. Upon opening the files inside it, the young soldier was floored by the information it contained. Rau Le Creuset had been feeding information to both sides of the war...and then he got to an even bigger shocker, to him. His own father, Patrick Zala, was currently constructing a massive superweapon using technology from the stolen G-weapons. The plans were right here, a space station covered in Phase Shift Armor, capable of cloaking with Mirage Colloid and had enough firepower to wipe out at least half a fleet in one shot!

This...this couldn't be! His father was on the verge of committing genocide if that weapon was completed! And these files on Commander Rau, the data showed that he's been handing out bits of information to just the right person at just the right time and all of a sudden, the war started escalating with no end in sight! Heck, it was due to Rau's plans that they even went after the G-weapons in the first place! Did he really intend for Athrun's father to take the stolen tech and turn it into...THAT?! Kira and Lacus...they knew!

That realization hit Athrun like a falling Mobile Suit. They knew...they had intended to reclaim the G-weapons to try and head off this horrible weapon...but they couldn't have known that the data had already been sent on ahead. The construction of the GENESIS superweapon was already in progress! This was madness!

Athrun then realized how close he had come to falling into the same pit. The death of his mother at Junius 7 had set him on the path to becoming one of the Elite Pilots of ZAFT. The desire for revenge demanded that he annihilate the ones who launched the nuke that destroyed the agricultural PLANT and killed everyone within. Because of that Us vs Them reflex, he tried to get Kira away from the Naturals, assuming that he was being manipulated into fighting on the wrong side. But here...here was evidence that ZAFT was just as in the wrong!

With trembling hands, Athrun searched the ship's database. He had thought it justified at the time, to ensure that no more nuclear warheads could be fired at the PLANTs. But now...He found the files he wanted. The end result of ZAFT's counterattack to the nuke. The April Fool's Crisis, hundreds of Neutron Jammers saturated the world, preventing all possible nuclear fission. You could count on one hand with fingers to spare, the number of countries that managed to avoid a drastic drop in available power. The death count of Junius 7, according to the consensus at the time, was a population of 243,721. The resulting energy crisis caused by the Neutron Jammers left well over quadruple that amount dead from cold and starvation alone.

Faced with that, Athrun questioned what he was actually fighting for. He thought back to when he settled Lacus into her room. She had asked him about his sadness, that he wasn't smiling even for her. His response was that he couldn't fight a war with a grin on his face. Now, what was he going to do? The cause he had believed in so righteously was just as bad as the other side. Everyone was just lashing out as the war escalated. Peace talks fell on the deaf ears of zealotry as they clamored for blood to be paid by blood.

But, what could he do? Even though he was Patrick Zala's son, he was just one soldier. This war wouldn't end to his voice alone. Another realization...why didn't Lacus stay on the Vesalius and return to tell her father of these plans? Siegal Clyne was the current Chairman of the Supreme Council. Surely if he brought this to light, they could put a stop to this. Then again, it wasn't just the radical

factions in ZAFT that wanted to continue this war. Both sides needed to reform...and it was Blue Cosmos that pulled the Atlantic Federation's strings. So long as they held power...

First thing's first. Athrun had to get in contact with Kira again. He had to know what his friend and fiance were planning to bring the war to a close.

Chapter 9

7.1

Kira Awoke shortly after rescuing Flay after the destruction of his home colony of Heliopolis. He was inside the hangar bay and was staring confusedly like every other member of the crew. A just as confused pair of violet eyes stared back, along with another pair and another pair...and another pair...all told, there was thirty-eight pairs of violet eyes staring back at him. As one, they all facepalmed and expressed his opinion on the matter.

"Damn it! A loop while affected by the Mikasa glitch!" Among the other Awake Loopers in the hangar bay at the time, Flay Allster, Mu La Flaga and Natarle Badgiruel, they looked at each other and thought about how interesting the loop was going to be and how short the war would be. Unfortunately, they didn't have any time to settle things regarding living space and such as the alert started blaring. Seemed they were discovered among the debris much earlier than usual.

"All hands, level one battle stations!" As one, all the Kiras looked at each other and nodded. Since there wasn't Mobile Suits on board, they decided to supply their own.

"I call dibs on the IWSP!" One suddenly shouted as he ran towards the launch catapult. Materializing a Strike Gundam with said Striker Pack on said launcher, that Kira made a zero g leap to the cockpit.

"No fair!" Declared another as he raced to the other catapult. This one chose a DOM Trooper with an EZ Wizard pack to pilot.

"Well, this will be a short battle at least," stated another as he made an Impulse Gundam with a Chaos Silhouette appear after the first one launched.

As each one launched, to the confusion of the person directing the launches, they all picked a Mobile Suit that could use either a Striker Pack, a Silhouette Pack or a Wizard Pack. Well, that was one way to differentiate them until they came back. Again, the three other Loopers in the hanger looked at each other and sighed. Natarle looked the most upset by the glitch.

"We don't have nearly enough pilot rooms for this."

7.2

It was once again time for the Second Bloody Valentine War. However, this time, Lacus wasn't just going to let it build as others wished. She decided to call upon the wise words of an ancient comedian. With Kira hacking into all the communications systems, she started a broadcast.

"Please listen to me, People of the Earth Sphere. I am Lacus Clyne. After the last war, I had just wanted to settle somewhere quiet and live without the politics that had killed my father and nearly brought about the genocide of humanity. It seems that I was in error to assume that I was no longer needed. Therefore, I now make this declaration."

Across the world and in Earth's Orbit, billions of people had stopped to listen. Frantically, the warmongers who saw the coming bloodshed to be a grand opportunity sought to stop the songstress turned political leader and her voice. However, despite their best efforts, they could not break the control her boyfriend had gained over the communication networks.

"The words I want to say at this time aren't mine. They are the sincere words of Charlie Chaplin, who spoke them during World War II, one of Humanity's darkest times. I believe, with all my heart, that these words still have meaning for everyone. But they have been mostly forgotten and the actions they called out against are

repeating. Please, for those of you who truly desire peace, keep these words in your heart.

'We all want to help one another. Human beings are like that. We want to live by each other's happiness, not by each other's misery. We don't want to hate and despise one another. In this world there is room for everyone. And the good earth is rich and can provide for everyone. The way of life can be free and beautiful, but we have lost the way.

Greed has poisoned men's souls; has barricaded the world with hate; has goose-stepped us into misery and bloodshed. We have developed speed, but we have shut ourselves in. Machinery that gives abundance has left us in want. Our knowledge has made us cynical; our cleverness, hard and unkind. We think too much and feel too little. More than machinery we need humanity. More than cleverness, we need kindness and gentleness. Without these qualities, life will be violent and all will be lost.

Even now my voice is reaching millions throughout the world, millions of despairing men, women, and little children, victims of a system that makes men torture and imprison innocent people. To those who can hear me, I say "Do not despair." The misery that is now upon us is but the passing of greed, the bitterness of men who fear the way of human progress. The hate of men will pass, and dictators die, and the power they took from the people will return to the people. And so long as men die, liberty will never perish.'"

All who were willing to listen to the desperate pleas of Lacus Clyne stood in awe of the impact those ancient words had. As she had been speaking, tears started pouring from her eyes. The sincerity of her heart was being bared before the whole world.

"Please, People of the Earth Sphere, do not let your hearts fall to hatred; do not let them be consumed by the greed of a few men who desire that this war spread. These despicable few don't care about the lives they ruin, the deaths they cause. All they care about is their own selfishness! They seek to reignite the smoldering spark of war

with their thoughtless hatred and desires to control the masses! They desire that others kill for their own jealousy or because not enough people believe like they do.

So please, don't let them succeed! Unite your hearts together and show those selfish and hate filled men that they cannot subjugate you! That humanity, both Naturals and Coordinators, is above their petty schemes and destructive plans. We are not perfect and such imperfection is why these men come to be and how they manipulate others around them! However, we can choose to bring their machinations to naught! Allow the good of our hearts to unite us and stop this war before its flames turn into an inferno that can't be stopped!"

Across the world and in Earth's orbit, billions of voices rose up in unified agreement. Civilians and Soldiers, Naturals and Coordinators alike all poured their hearts out for peace. The shadows that sought to turn the war for their own benefit could only gape in shock and fear as their plans were being struck down before they even got off the ground. Blue Cosmos trembled under the world shaking flood of united humanity.

Gilbert Durandal sat in his room, contemplating a magnificent glass chess set with anger his only expression. Several minutes of sitting there after the broadcast, the anger faded and bitter laughter replaced it. He knew he had been outplayed and in acknowledgement of his defeat, he tipped over the Black King piece.

"Lacus Clyne... to think, I had underestimated your power by so much. Truly, you know the hearts of the people. Without the war to make them weary, my Destiny Plan will never be accepted by the world. But, perhaps, it was never needed to begin with."

He stood up and strode out of the room. As he passed through the door, he briefly wondered if Talia Gladys was willing to accept his apology for taking so long to realize.

7.3 (Seeker213)

Flay and Natarle were standing over Azrael's headless body; which was holding, strangely enough, a cupcake with a bite taken out of it in the right hand.

"Huh. Never thought I'd see Azrael's head explode like that. Nice work Flay!" Natarle complimented, while Flay was smiling with pride. Then Natarle asked after a few moments, "but where did you get the exploding cupcake anyway?"

"Got it from Peter when I looped into Family Guy one time," Flay answered casually.

"Wait, I thought Family Guy wasn't looping." Natarle stated, confusion evident in her voice.

"True, but I don't think that stops people from looping there occasionally. It just means that place is not online," Flay replied with a shrug "But right now, let's focus on disposing the body, okay?"

"Okay! To the garbage disposal it goes, but first one thing," Natarle stated.

"Sure, what is it?" Flay questioned

"Dibs on holding the legs as we carry it!" Natarle smirked.

"Damn it!"

7.4

Ever since the time she was first killed because the only person with a gun in the room was a horrible, psychopathic manchild of a human being, Natarle Badgiruel has always made sure her Subspace Pocket had firearms of her own to use for any such situation. Now, as a military ship, the Archangel had an arsenal for when it was

needed and the second in command of said ship liked to visit there to make sure it was properly supplied and functional every loop she could. It was unlikely for people to actually use said guns, since they were only to be used by the security teams and during a very rare boarding party emergency. After all, you're more likely to be shot down than be boarded during a battle.

Her first surprise came in the form of the guns she found in the arsenal. Specifically, they looked like normal guns she was familiar with, but had glowing parts added onto the slide to make it look futuristic. Oddly, her loop memories only gave her information in the form of her being told that some experimental firearms were included in the Archangel's arsenal. Aesthetically, they didn't seem too bad, though the "barrel" was stretched down into the frame. Was this supposed to be some kind of beam gun? That couldn't be right, since the current level of technology was baseline so even the smallest beam weapon was made for Mobile Suits.

Natarle then shrugged before tucking it into her uniform. There wasn't many places she could safely set up a shooting range on the Archangel, but she was now itching to see if this weapon worked. Since they had apparently already descended to Earth's surface, she decided to set up out on the deck. Her target was a simple paper outline with bull's eyes in the middle of the chest and head. She stood several paces away, took a deep breath, lined up her shot and then pulled the trigger. A beam of light lanced out of the barrel and struck the target, but didn't do anything to it.

The Ensign blinked rapidly in confusion, lowering her gun at the same time. Er, wasn't it supposed to shoot through the target like any normal gun? She checked the gun over, seeing if it was on some kind of low power setting. Seeing that there was no indication of it being at anything other than intended strength, Natarle frowned. As a test, she took aim once more and pulled off three more shots. Just like before, they did no visible damage. Gritting her teeth, she turned and ran back to the arsenal to see what was up.

She had gotten odd looks and surprised shouts as she rushed down the hallways of the Archangel, making a beeline for her destination. Upon reaching the weapon storage room, she dropped the gun she had in hand and picked up the nearest other one. Natarle just pointed it at an empty part of the closest wall and pulled the trigger. When the beam failed to even scoff the paint, she threw that gun away and grabbed another. Each and every single weapon she used, from the pistols all the way up to the heavy ordnance stuff, fired a beam of light that did nothing. At this point, she was very frustrated with the seemingly useless weapons her superiors had decided to give the Archangel for the maiden voyage.

In her seething mood, when the door opened behind her to allow a young man with brown hair and violet eyes inside to check on her, she immediately spun around and pulled the trigger of the firearm she had in her grasp. The young man could only stare with wide eyes as the beam lanced out and struck him. Natarle's rage immediate subsided as she realized just who she shot at. Kira Yamato became engulfed in a strange orb of prismatic light for a couple seconds before it faded.

When he was revealed again, the pair could only stare slack-jawed at the result. His usual clothes had been replaced by a white disco suit, with platform shoes to match. Natarle also saw that his hair was now blown up into an afro. To complete the ensemble, he was wearing a pair of hippie shades. The second in command of the Archangel choked out some disbelieving noises before she lifted the gun up to examine it again. She only now spotted the name of the weapon on its frame...

"D...D...D...DISCO GUN?!"

7.5 - Gundam SEED/GaoGaiGar

"FUUUUSION!" Kira roared as a giant robotic lion opened its mouth behind him and he flipped into it. It closed after him and began to change. The lion robot took a vertical stance, the hind legs

straightening out like a human's and the front legs became arms with the claws folding back to reveal hands. Finally, the lion's head slid down over the chest and revealed a more human head. Taking a pose, the super robot declared its name in Kira's voice, "GaiGar!"

Kira had taken the place of one Guy Shishioh, a former astronaut who had become a cyborg to save his life after a horrific accident happened to his shuttle and the only reason he lived long enough to be converted was due to the giant mecha lion he had just joined with, Galeon. As a member of GGG, the Gutsy Geoid Guard, Kira Shishioh was responsible for defeating the Zonderians who were converting humans into their mechanical army with Zonder Metals. His current opponent was the Zonder EI-13, a mecha made from a part-time employee of the Waterpolis aquatic amusement park who worked in one of the mascot suits...and thus its main form looked like a giant mecha version of said suit.

The amusement park had evacuated shortly after the Giant Robot started rampaging while casualties were kept to a minimum during that time by Volfogg, a GGG mecha that looked like a stereotypical ninja and could take the form of a police car. However, since GaiGar wasn't usually enough to defeat the Zonder Robo that Zonderians turned people into, he had to go to the next form. As GaiGar didn't have a traditional cockpit, Kira sent a mental signal to the GGG HQ for Final Fusion.

"Commander Taiga, Kira's signalling for Final Fusion!" Flay Allster declared as a panel on her console started flashing 'Danger'. The redheaded girlfriend of the current cyborg Anchor and Koutarou Taiga were the only two members of GGG that were Awake this loop. Flay was replacing Mikoto Utsugi, who was Guy Shishioh's girlfriend. Anyway, the muscular blonde man who lead GGG didn't hesitate before he decided.

"Alright...FINAL FUSION, APPROVED!" He energetically pointed at Flay as he shouted this decision.

"Roger! Final Fusion..." Flay acknowledged before rapidly typing in the codes to activate and ready the Gaomachines, three support mecha in the forms of a stealth plane, bullet train and drilling tank that combine with GaiGar to give him greater power. Once all the codes had been entered, the automated connection programming awaited activation by the press of the button panel flashing 'Danger'. Just like Mikoto, Flay pressed it in as dramatic a fashion as possible...she lifted her right fist and slammed it with all her strength. "Program...DRIVE!"

Kira received the return signal that indicated that Final Fusion was approved and he can begin at any time.

"ALRIGHT! FINAL FUSION!" GaiGar started spinning in midair, expelling particles that formed a tornado of energy around him that repelled any attempts by the enemy to interrupt the combination process. After a long and complicated sequence, Kira stood before the enemy as the King of Braves, "GAO! GAI! GAR!"

7.6

Kira knew something was off when he Woke up, but he didn't have any idea of how strange it'd get. He was performing maintenance on this loop's Strike, setting up to turn it into the Perfect Strike. The main problem he always had with making it from the starting baseline Striker Packs was the fact that the batteries he had access to weren't powerful enough to make the energy last in battle. The version he was most familiar with used four of ORB's latest model of battery. Sure, he could take some from his Subspace Pocket, but he didn't want to make everyone suspicious.

As he was working, the Archangel suddenly shook from an explosion against the hull. Abandoning the maintenance, Kira rushed to the cockpit and turned it on so he could use the communications on it. And here's where it got weird. His voice was the same, but what he said wasn't what he thought he was going to say.

"What happen?"

"Somebody set us up the bomb." The currently unawake Miriallia stated with a worried expression.

"We get signal." The communications officer called back to the captain.

"What?! Main screen turn on." Murrue Ramius ordered with a furious expression. The face that appeared on the screen had blonde hair and wore a white mask.

"It's you!" Mu La Flaga shouted from his position next to the captain's chair.

"How are you gentlemen," The face of Rau Le Creuset spoke casually. "All your base are belong to us. You are on the way to destruction."

"What you say?!" Murrue Ramius asked with a horrified expression that was matched by everyone else on the bridge.

"You have no chance to survive." Rau allowed a smug grin to appear on his face. "Make your time. Hahahaha."

"Captain!" Kira called out through his com.

"Take off every Gundam! You know what you doing!" Murrue declared without the slightest idea of how horrible her grammar was. "Move Gundam! For Great Justice!"

Well, he had his orders...he just really hoped this was a single incident of butchered language.

Chapter 10

8.1a

What the hell is going on here?! Was the very first thought of one blonde haired, amber eyed Cagalli Yula Athha as she took in what she was seeing. The last thing she remembered, she had fallen asleep in bed after a particularly long and boring cabinet meeting. Well, it hadn't been all bad...Athrun was her bodyguard again. She was glad for that, though the discussion they had before it had been settled was...awkward. They had agreed not to rush into anything like they had done before. A pair of 18 year olds with big responsibilities and having seen friends and family die because of the first war...not exactly the best setup for a stable relationship.

Still, when she opened her eyes and saw Kira and his four friends working on that powered suit, she was beyond floored. Possibly thinking it was some kind of hallucination, Cagalli reached up and pinched her cheek. When it did nothing to dispel what she was seeing, Cagalli wondered if she should warn them about ZAFT's attack. As she was lowering her arm, Kira looked over at her...what was up with his eyes? They seemed...old, older than anyone she's seen before. It was almost like staring into two violet universes. Still, they held the kind warmth that she had always known of Kira. Even when he was mad, he had that warmth in his eyes.

Now she was staring at him...and he was staring right back. In fact, his expression was one of confusion and curiosity. However, there wasn't much time for her to puzzle out this little change in her Coordinator brother. The building suddenly started shaking as the ZAFT attack commenced. Well, there was no helping it now. They had to escape.

Well, that played out just like her memory. They had all run to emergency stairs to find a huge stream of people traveling up it. After it was mentioned that ZAFT had attacked, she turned and ran the

other way. Why'd she do it this time? Cagalli wasn't quite sure. Was it because she wanted to confirm that everything was as her memories told her...or was it because Kira wouldn't get into the Strike and protect everyone on the Archangel if he hadn't followed her? That caused her to pause in her running. She had knowledge of the future and the more she used it to make changes, the more it became invalid. This was going to mess with her mind.

The ceiling collapsed like the time in her memories. However, because Cagalli had paused, she was underneath the collapsing section. Now she was grateful that Kira had followed her, as he tackled her out of the way and shielded her with his body until it stopped. Not her most dignified moment right there. He stood up again, dusting himself off but pretty unfazed by the fact that he almost had hundreds of pounds of debris fall on him. Then, as she was in the middle of recovering herself, he said something that snapped her out of the funk she had just been in.

"So, still processing memories you don't know why you have, Sis?"

Wait...SIS!?

Since they didn't have much time before Kira had to get into the Strike, he told her as they moved. Yggdrasil, the World Tree computer, housed every multiverse in its branches and it had been damaged by something. To stabilize Yggdrasil and the worlds it supported, they had been put into endlessly repeating time loops until the damage was fixed eons from now. A single person judged to be able to handle the repetition known as the Anchor would remember each Loop, though exceptions existed. After an Anchor has looped for a time, people they know can Awaken, though they don't do so every time like the Anchor. Kira had been chosen for their branch.

By now, they were near the Strike and the battle over the remaining G-Weapons. Kira looked at his Natural sister and asked.

"So, with that out of the way, what do you want to do? You can go to the emergency shelter like baseline and end up with the Desert Dawn again or you can stay with me and travel with the Archangel."

This was a lot to take in. Time was broken and her little brother was helping stabilize it. With these loops, she had all the time in the world to learn whatever she wanted. Finally, as they saw the Earth Alliance personnel drop like flies before the trained ZAFT soldiers, Cagalli gave her answer.

"So, why'd you decide to try your hand at being a Mobile Suit Pilot?" The blonde haired Cagalli asked from the cockpit of her Strike Rouge. Essentially, it was a slightly improved Strike with the Phase Shift Armor colored lightish red. "And why is Kira making us use these Striker Packs for training?"

Beside her was the original Strike with the amalgamation of the three basic Striker Packs called the Multiple Assault Striker. It had everything the basic packs had; one anti-ship beam sword, one beam boomerang, one rocket anchor, one combined weapons pod- an anti-ship vulcan and two rpg launchers, one giant beam cannon and bigger thrusters. However, it consumed energy at an enormous rate, thus had four batteries to power the dang thing. Cagalli's own MS was equipped with the Striker Pack made based on the Multiple Assault, the overload called the Integrated Weapons Striker Pack or ISWP.

The MASP was still relatively balanced and easy to use, if power hungry, while the IWSP was unbalanced by a shield with integrated gatling gun and beam boomerang on the left arm. On top of that, while it had plenty of firepower, it was also power intensive and Cagalli had initially found the control system too complex to use in actual combat. If she couldn't master it, she wouldn't trust her life to it.

"I was tired of Kira always having to be the one to protect everyone. So, I thought during one loop, if I could learn to pilot like you and Mu

could, then I could take some of that burden off him rather than give him more of a burden to deal with," Flay Allster answered, as she appeared on Cagalli's screen. She looked very sheepish as she continued, "Unfortunately, I had seriously underestimated just how difficult learning to pilot a Mobile Suit is. My first time out while training alongside Natarle caused me to basically fly around randomly while my Mobile Suit flopped like a fish. After that, they took to securing me to the Archangel with a strong cable to keep me from getting too far from the ship."

Flay's shoulders sagged while Cagalli just started laughing. After a few moments, Flay glared at the blonde tomboy as if to tell her to stop that. As the laughter faded, the redhead continued.

"I have a power from a fused loop that grants me the instinctive knowledge on how to use anything, but I didn't want to rely on a crutch for something this important." That made the remaining laughter stop. If Flay considered it important enough that she didn't want to cheat it, then Cagalli was going to take her seriously. "Which brings me to your second question. It's taken me a long time, but I've been able to use the individual Striker Packs to a level Kira and Mu consider reasonable. So now, if I want to prove I can move on to more complex Mobile Suits, I have to use the basic Striker Packs combined."

Suddenly, it became clear to Cagalli. After failing to master the IWSP, she resorted to the basic Aile Striker Pack for actual combat and later upgrading to the much easier to master Ootori Striker after the start of the second war. If the Natural sister of the Ultimate Coordinator wanted to grow as a pilot, then she had to master even the most complicated Mobile Suit systems. In her mind, she came to a decision. Cagalli wanted the skill to be able to fight alongside her brother as an equal. Heck, piloting had a much lower learning curve than being a politician. Sometimes, she swore it was like trying to be a daycare employee, except no nap time, more name calling and more paperwork.

Cagalli shook those thoughts from her head. On her screen, she saw the Freedom had finished setting up targets for the upcoming practice. It then gave the signal for the pair to start.

"Flay Allster, Perfect Strike, launching!"

"Cagalli Yula Athha, Strike Rouge IWSP, launching!"

8.3 Gundam SEED/Megaman

Dr. Thomas Light Awoke at the time he finished making the robots he considered his children, Rock and Roll. Certainly not the earliest he's ever started a Loop, but those tend to be a rarer variant than when he wakes up closer to Dr Wily's first attempt at taking over the world. Though, was it just him or was there something odd about Rock and Roll this loop? The hair colors of the two were the same, but the style was different with "Rock" having more even, straight hair while "Roll" had shorter hair than usual. Their facial design was different too.

After examining his Loop memories, he found nothing wrong with them compared to his baseline. So, it was either a fused loop or just a variant. Well, there was an easy way to find out. He brought the two robots he made online. As they powered up and started awakening, Dr. Light stepped back and waited. He saw their eyes open up as the systems boot-up completed. The good doctor was a bit puzzled that his unawake self had chosen violet eyes for "Rock" and amber ones for "Roll", but it helped to confirm that it was either loopers, unawake people from a different loop...or still, just a variant.

Once he was sure they were both properly online, he sent out a Ping...and got two responses. They both blinked and turned to face him. Upon seeing him, they both sat up. Well, that confirmed Looper status.

"Hello there. It's been awhile since I've had to tend to Loopers without one of my children with me." Dr. Light greeted them with a

kind smile. He didn't recognize them, but just by how they were acting, they weren't bad Loopers. Until/unless they proved otherwise, he was going to be nice. The boy replacing Rock looked a bit surprised.

"Dr. Light? Wow, it's an honor to meet you." Said boy hopped off where he was sitting so he could offer a handshake.

"Yes, I am. Er, sorry. I don't know who you are in return," the stocky old man stated apologetically as he shook the offered hand.

"Oh, sorry. My name is Kira Yamato," the now identified boy responded with obvious embarrassment. Kira looked back at the just as young looking blonde girl and continued more normally. "That's Cagalli, my twin sister."

"Cagalli Yula Athha, his elder twin sister," she huffed. Kira just laughed good-naturedly. Even after learning that he had been looping for thousands of years before she started looping, she still insisted that he was her younger brother. She certainly tended to act like a protective older sibling, sometimes.

"But I'm the Anchor of our branch," he pointed out. Maybe it was because he was in a young boy's body, but it felt kind of nice to have normal sibling interaction with his sister.

"I'm still the elder twin," his stubborn tomboy sister insisted. Dr. Light chuckled at the exchange. They seemed to get along pretty well.

"Well, in either case, perhaps we can talk some more after we've gotten you some proper clothes." The good natured doctor suggested. Immediately, the pair looked down at themselves to see the obviously robotic bodies they now had...were naked. Of course, there wasn't anything there to hide, but they did get very embarrassed over it...Cagalli far more than Kira.

"Yeah, that's a good idea," the young boy robot replied.

8.4

ORB Prime Minister Unato Ema Seiran, a balding man with graying hair and wearing orange tinted glasses, felt rather smug at the moment. The Chief Representative, the blond Cagalli Yula Athha, was so close to ceding to his position of siding with the Atlantic Federation. Her father and his loyal council members were idiots for giving up their lives so frivolously in the last war while destroying the mass driver to deny it to the Atlantic Federation. Ha, leave his daughter all alone in a hostile political environment with no support.

His son, Yuna Roma Seiran, had just taken the rug from under her feet. Heh, that foolish girl trying to get into politics while being such a spitfire. She doesn't even have a decent poker face. She was sitting in the same spot her late father used to, eyes closed and teeth grit in hopeless anger. However, as he watched her, reading her body language like the skilled politician he was, he noticed an unnerving change happen to her. Gone was the building pressure, the hesitation and loss. It was if the wreck she had been was replaced by a brick...no, an iron wall.

The eyes that greeted the council after they opened again were confused, for some reason. However, upon laying her gaze on him and his son, the confusion was replaced the sharp eyes of hate and disgust. It was only his long time as a politician that kept him from showing the fear that the sight instilled in him; Yuna failed miserably. Under that glare, Unato felt very small...like a mouse in a staring contest with a hungry lion. What the heck just happened that changed her entire demeanor?

"Gentlemen, let me just summarize the position you are trying to push. You want to break the official stance of neutrality ORB has maintained for years in favor of an alliance with the Atlantic Federation. The same military power that invaded ORB in the last war, no less. And the main reason you give is so that they won't attack us again." Her words were steady and sure as she stood up to address everyone in the council room. However, Cagalli was

projecting undeniable power just from her sheer presence. Then, she held up a hand and started ticking fingers.

"One: they had only invaded because they sought ORB's mass driver after losing all of theirs; I saw their official demands and quite frankly, anyone who would agree to them without a fight was too stupid to understand what those demands meant. Two: they are responsible for the programs that made the Boosted Men and Extendeds...and you think they won't take the opportunity that an alliance presents to take more civilians for such a purpose? Three: ZAFT will see us as indelibly linked to the Atlantic Federation, making us a potential target anyway as well as harming our relationships with any nation that opposes the AF's policies.

"This brings me to Four: if we are shown in support of the AF's policies and they lose, then that further blackens ORB's name. And they will make us support their policies, because breaking the alliance just makes us targets for the AF again...right? That doesn't mean they'd invade us, but more than likely, it'd mean embargoes and heavy taxes on everything entering and leaving ORB."

"They could still do that to make us accept their terms on an alliance! Better we set our own terms before then!" one councilman stated, panic starting to form on his face.

"Doing that on a Nation not directly opposing them for no current reason is stupid. The other nations would never approve and just further tarnish the Atlantic Federation's reputation. Except for our rebuilt mass driver, there's little strategic use of capturing ORB given the cost of invading...unless we do something stupid, like say making an alliance for the short term gain with a nation currently fighting a pointless war when efforts should be focused on rebuilding after the Break The World incident."

Unato and Yuna shared a brief glance. With how well she was doing after the sudden change, they weren't in much of a position to try and contradict her. The council couldn't legally overturn the Chief Representative, which is why they had been working to get her to

agree in the first place. And now, here she was pointing out the flaws of making the alliance agreement with a poker face that hid all of that emotion the Seirans needed to do their manipulations. What the heck was going on?!

"Ugh, even after so many years of learning the ins and outs and all that junk, being a politician is a frustrating annoyance. Being a pilot is so much easier," Cagalli stated from the cockpit of her Strike Rouge IWSP. Kira was flying to the right of her in his own Strike while it was equipped with the armed wings of a Noir Striker Pack. On the other side was a Windam, one of the latest of Atlantic Federation Mobile Suits that were compatible with Striker Packs. It was equipped a rather basic Jet Striker.

"Are you going to give up being Chief Representative?" her twin brother teased over the com.

"Pffft, hell no! I'm proud to follow in my father's footsteps. I just wish it wasn't so much like herding cats. I swear, even when I can shoot down any argument they bring up, they have to nitpick every last detail."

"That's hostile politics for you." On the other side of her comlink was Mu La Flaga, an older blonde guy. "Though, it's almost too bad you've managed to prevent ORB from allying with the Atlantic Federation."

When he noticed the nasty glare Cagalli was giving him, he then continued, "I know, I know. But without ZAFT invading to get at Djibril, then those two Seiran idiots will survive since there won't be any Mobile Suits to fall on them."

"Now who said I was going to let them get away with their attempt at a takeover?" Cagalli's grin was predatory. "We have proof of their connection to LOGOS, after all. Their political careers are going to be blown apart."

"Oh, I know. We can have Lacus call out LOGOS before Durandal can while also implicating him with being a part of it too," Kira spoke up.

"Wow, that is a very brutal plan there." Mu La Flaga whistled with respect.

"With what Djibril and Durandal seek to do, what we're planning is more than they deserve."

"Sounds like an idea to me." Cagalli interjected. "However, let's just enjoy this downtime for now. Come on, back to practice."

This declaration was met with two pairs of rolling eyes before the trio aimed their beam rifles and pulled the triggers.

8.1b

"Well, this is just GREAT!" Cagalli groused as she tapped at the control panel of her Skygrasper fighter jet. She had gotten separated from the Archangel during a battle, just like what had happened in her memories. And once again, her Skygrasper had taken damage and crash landed next to a small island. This was such a pain...but then, it was where she first met...She shook that thought from her head. She had to focus on survival, just in case it was a variant like her brother had warned her could happen.

First thing's first, getting out of the Skygrasper and onto dry land. In her memories, Cagalli recalled her survival pack getting washed away by the tide after she had jumped into the water. This time, she made sure the pack was secured to her before getting out of the cockpit. With the strap going on the shoulder opposite the hip where her pack was, she was reasonably sure it was secured as she jumped into the water. Just like last time, the tide washed over her, but her pack wasn't dragged off by the wave. She sighed with relief for that.

Now with her survival pack ready, Cagalli waded towards dry land. Once she was on dry land, she had to do two things; first was set up camp and second was dry off her clothes from the dip. Well, to make camp, she had to find an area big enough. That was no problem, since there was the area she knew was up ahead from her memories. Before she moved out, however, she heard the sound of rocks clacking together.

"Who's there?!" Cagalli shouted as she pulled out a pistol and aimed it in the direction of the noise. She heard some continued movement before she got a reply.

"Are you with the Earth Alliance?" That voice sounded familiar. It took a bit of willpower for Cagalli not to blurt out the name that came to mind. Since time had reset, he wouldn't remember her and thus find it suspicious that she knew his name.

"Oh, it's a person." The blonde young lady stated instead, making a small show of putting her pistol away. "You can come out; I'm not going to shoot."

A young man about her age with black hair and emerald green eyes poked his head around the rock he was hiding behind. Upon seeing that her hands were empty, he came out with his hands empty as well. He was dressed in a red ZAFT pilot suit, meaning he was an elite pilot.

"You haven't answered my question." Well, that proved he was still wary and would probably go for his pistol if he interpreted anything she did as threatening.

"My name is Cagalli, citizen of ORB." She huffed. This was going to take some getting used to. The young man's eyes flicked to the fighter jet that was sticking out of the water.

"Then why were you piloting an EA fighter jet?" he returned with a suspicious glare.

"Well, aren't you a paranoid one," Cagalli snarked back. "I'm not attacking you, so why the twenty questions?"

The young man scowled. This one was going to be a handful. "Just answer the question."

Now it was the blonde girl's turn to scowl at the ZAFT soldier. After a moment of silence, she mentally shrugged and told him, "Because the Archangel didn't have anyone else who was qualified to pilot and I didn't want to die without trying to fight."

"The Archangel? You mean, the EA's Legged Ship?" That caught him by surprise.

"Wow, what a dumb reporting name. The Legged Ship...I'm sure my friends there will get a kick out of hearing that," Cagalli sassed the soldier. She knew somewhere in the back of her mind that she shouldn't, but knowing the man he'd become made it kind of fun. "Well, I've told you my name. What's yours, soldier boy?"

"...Athrun." He was scowling again. Depending on why he was doing it, it was actually kind of cute. Like he was trying to be serious but the circumstances around him weren't. However, here's where Cagalli decided to break passed his serious exterior.

"Athrun? Strange." She made a show of thinking about the name. Athrun's scowl turned into a confused look. "My friend, Kira, said he knew someone by that name."

"K...Kira?! Kira Yamato? You know him?" He was obviously caught flat-footed by the name drop. I mean, despite him being a soldier, he was still a hormonal teenager.

"Yeah, I know him and I also know the fact that he's had to fight his best friend has been difficult for him." Cagalli wasn't quite sure where this attitude of hers was coming from. Perhaps it was due to the knowledge that Athrun was currently still in ZAFT Crusader mode...which he had only snapped out of, in her experience, when

he thought he had killed Kira during their last battle between the Strike and Aegis. Perhaps if she could reach him before then...

Yeah, that didn't turn out so well. Between their tempers, things had eventually devolved into a shouting match...and then Cagalli put what she had been learning from her brother to use. Since she had decided to stay with him that loop, Cagalli had asked Kira to help train her to be a better pilot and some self defense. So, he taught her the best spots to hit for a quick takedown and some grapples that were effective even against bigger foes. Doesn't matter how much stronger you are over your opponent if they had the better leverage, after all. It probably also helped that she had used some pepper spray she got from an Awake Flay and had taken his gun away while he was blinded.

"Say uncle! Say uncle dammit!" She currently had Athrun pinned in a half boston crab.

"Never! Ouch! Let go!"

8.5

Gundam SEED/Steven Universe

The black haired, tubby young boy Anchor was feeling kind of sad, though it was completely unnoticeable under his regular happy demeanor. No matter how many times he sent out a Ping, he didn't get any response. No, the pings weren't all in one day, but spread out over time. Hey, even as a long lived looper, he was still a kid to some extent. He had his family and their fun adventures...what more could you want?

Well anyway, one of the main reasons he was sending out Pings so often was due to the Crystal Gem Garnet looking and acting a bit off from baseline. Her coloring was a shade or two darker, for one. She was also talking a bit more often than her normal unawake self did so early and she had a habit of humming and/or singing while

working or relaxing. There was definite scale, but never lyrics. Pearl, Amethyst and his own loop memories confirm that this is normal for the Garnet of this loop. Seems like some kind of minor variant.

He didn't think much of it as the days passed. The Crystal Gems fought the usual monsters from baseline, going down easier thanks to Steven being Awake and able to use his powers better than the first time around. He had also rescued and restored the Gem Lapis Lazuli from the mirror she had been sealed in earlier than normal, which just made later foes easier to take down with her great power. However, it was all too soon when the Gems Peridot and Jasper can around with their giant hand ship.

Now, here's where another variation came up. Steven was expecting Peridot and Jasper to come down to try and subdue them like normal. Instead, the ship produced a giant cone of the same kind of energy that the hand-held Gem Destabilizers used. While his hybrid status still negated the main effect on him, he was still left a bit dizzy from just how much more of it was engulfing him. At least, that's the excuse he thought up when he was blindsided by Jasper's armored headbutt.

Steven awoke to find himself in the jail cell the Gems usually put him in. Since he was overall immune to the effects of the barrier that normally kept Gems in the cells, save for some small amount of shocking from the energy, he just walked out. Not really sure how long he was knocked out, the physically young Anchor let out a Ping. Perhaps someone Woke up in that time?

Steven was answered by two Pings, both from inside the ship. That made him happy, since it meant at least two of the Crystal Gems was Awake now. He briefly wondered which two Woke up as he headed towards the cell that held Ruby. However, there was something different about the kiddy-sized Gem. For one thing, the shade of red was a bit darker. Also, her outfit was different; no headband, a jacket instead of a tanktop and a skirt in place of shorts. She was pacing in the cell, looking rather annoyed.

"Hey, are you feeling Loopy?" Steven asked, though he was pretty sure of the answer. The Gem was startled out of her pacing, causing her to look at the boy that was about her height.

"Yeah and I've been looking for an Anchor," said one half of this loop's Garnet. She smiled at him. "I am Flay Allster, though my loop name is Pyrope. It's nice to meet you, Steven."

"Nice to meet you too, Pyrope." The physically young Looper smiled back. "Here, let me get you out of there."

Casually, Steven stepped into the path of the barrier and made a hole for her to step through with his arms. He didn't seem affected by it save for some apparently harmless shocking. Pyrope stepped through the opening with a thank you, allowing Steven to step out again.

"I would have been able to get out myself, but for some reason, I couldn't use my Subspace Pocket," the child-sized red Gem complained. "At least, I haven't been able to take things out of it. It sucks."

"I understand. I don't like when I can't get at my super duper awesome stash of Cookie Cat ice cream sandwiches." At her curious look, he chuckled embarrassingly, "It took me more than a few loops after learning to make my Subspace Pocket to find a way to power a freezer to keep my Cookie Cat packages cold."

"I can imagine the disappointment you had when the Subspace Pocket didn't automatically preserve the ice cream. Anyway, since I'm looping in as part of your friend, I should find my counterpart."

"I know where she is and can get her out of the cell. Come on." Steven turned and gestured for her to follow. Pyrope ran after with no complaints. The pair ran straight for the holding cell that usually held Sapphire, only pausing to hide from the Gems who had captured them in the first place. Once those two left, the pair quickly

entered to free the other part of Garnet. Just like with what Steven knew was baseline, she was singing a wordless tune.

This other Gem was much different compared to Sapphire. For one, she wasn't blue, but instead an interesting shade of pink. Secondly, her bangs were parted and you could see her eyes. Third was a hair decoration she wore on the left side; what looked like a golden pair of dashes that curve up near the ends. Finally, her dress had a shorter skirt, which seemed stiffer, her detached sleeves had long ribbons attached to them, also rather stiff, and appeared somewhat shimmering. She stopped singing as they approached.

"Steven, Pyrope!" the pink Gem exclaimed happily.

"Rhodonite!" the red Gem returned, only kept from leaping into the arms of her counterpart by the Destabilization barrier blocking the cell. Steven quickly got in the way and opened up a hole for Rhodonite to slip through. After stepping out of the cell, the Looper who replaced Sapphire decided to introduce herself to Steven properly.

"Nice to meet you, Steven." She curtsied. "In this loop, I'm Rhodonite, but my actual name is Lacus Clyne."

"Oh, heh. Nice to meet you too." Now, just because he still has his young body doesn't mean Steven always acts childish. He has gained maturity from the Loops; he just figures it's more fun not to use it at times. Looking between the two Gems and thinking about how they are Garnet this loop, he asked, "Are you two lesbians?"

That got them blushing, since they weren't expecting him to know that kind of thing. Still, Lacus smiled as she explained, "Not quite, Steven. Yes, we love each other a lot, but that had taken time to develop. Actually, our baseline interactions..."

"My unawake self was something of a bad person," Flay took over. "I was pretty much a step or two away from being part of the big hate

group that started the wars of our baseline...and then I snapped after watching my father's ship blow up right in front of me and..."

Steven watched as Lacus hugged her counterpart to calm her down. After a moment, she continued the explanation, "Anyway, our interactions probably would have ended there...I was there when it happened, but since we weren't technically on the same side at the time, I was returned to my home nation shortly afterwards. However, there was something of a quirk of fate that happened. We both fell in love with the same guy."

"Yeah. He's a very kind and gentle man, but was drawn into the war that was happening." Flay picked up. "He didn't like fighting, but he was the only reason we survived for so long. And I...didn't exactly help matters."

"Those details aren't important right now," the pink Gem stated from where she was hugging her counterpart.

"I know." With a shake of her head, the red Gem continued, "Anyway. Thanks to the loops, the three of us reconciled and even became mind-link mates."

"Whoa, that sounds so cool!" Steven exclaimed with his starry eyes. After a moment, he remembered, "Oh, I'd better go get the others. You guys think you can take on Jasper?"

The two kid-sized Gems just looked at each other for a moment with smirks on their faces. Not saying anything, Pyrope lifted Rhodonite into the air and started twirling around. They started spinning faster and faster, coming off the ground as they blurred together. Finally, the fusion completed and Garnet landed in front of Steven again. Only difference from baseline is two of her eyes different colors, which made sense since one of the pair was pink instead of blue.

"Alright, I'm ready to rock. You go rescue the others." With a determined nod, Steven ran off in one direction while the newly reformed Garnet headed in the opposite one.

8.6

Gundam SEED/Zombies Ate My Neighbors

Cagalli Yula Athha Woke up to a very weird and creepy loop. For one thing, she was a guy wearing those supposedly 3D paper glasses that were always handed out that those low budget b-movies. Also, his blonde hair was ridiculously spiked upwards. Finally, Cagalli was wearing a black t-shirt with a skull on the front and blue jeans. In her hands was a fully loaded water gun that looked something like an SMG, colored red. Hearing a female groan to the right, he looked over and spotted a familiar face.

There was the Anchor of the Gundam SEED branch, Kira Yamato...as a gal. Her brown hair was covered by a red cap with what wasn't fluffed out behind the head. She was also wearing a violet jacket over a white tank top and a red skirt. In her hands was a blue water gun in the same design as Cagalli's.

"So, 'sis'...what's it like being a girl?" Cagalli teased his gender swapped "brother". She shrugged in response.

"Don't care. I got over it after the first time. Cagalli, you have to remember that I've been looping for a very long time in comparison to you. The 'rule 63' loops are practically dime a dozen." Well, Cagalli felt disappointed. Though, were they really that common? Kira could probably tell what she was thinking about from her expression as she continued. "Okay, they don't happen that often, but they are still one of the common variants."

Cagalli huffed at his sister. He did not really look forward to when he experienced an otherwise baseline loop while in the wrong gender. Shaking those thoughts from his head, he noticed she was looking at everything with a frown. Before he could ask what she was looking for, she exclaimed.

"I recognize this place now. I'm pretty sure it hasn't been activated, but I recall playing the back-up in my last Hub loop." She hefted the water gun into a proper shooting position, even though it wasn't a real gun. "It's pretty much as many monster movie cliches as you can fit into one game."

"Wait, we're expected to take on things like werewolves and vampires with squirt guns?" The currently male Cagalli gaped.

"We'll find more weapons later...but these are pretty good too." With a grin, the female Kira pointed to a part of the toy before saying, "Check the name."

Now frowning himself, Cagalli did so. The brand of the water gun was...Blessed Waters, Inc. His eyebrows shot up.

"These toys...contain Holy Water?!"

"Yup. Now come on! We have to go save everyone!" With that, she rushed off. Sighing in frustration, Cagalli hurried after her sister. In his mind, he thought.

Fighting monster movie cliches with holy water squirt guns...please tell me that this loop doesn't get weirder than this.

8.7

Gundam SEED/Frozen

Kira Awoke to find himself in a rather girly bed. It took only a moment after that to confirm that he was indeed female this loop. With a mental shrug, she sent out a Ping while waiting for her loop memories. A ping returned near instantly, so it didn't seem like the fellow looper was rather close. A moment after receiving the ping, the loop memories kicked in.

She was more than a bit shocked by the events she recalled as the memories flooded in. She was Kira of Arendelle, elder princess and current heir to the throne. For some unexplained reason, she was born with power over all things cold. Generally, she had only used that power for fun with her sister, Cagalli. However, during one such time, there was an accident and Cagalli took a blast of ice magic to the head. She told their parents, who then took them to the trolls to correct things. In her opinion...the trolls could have done it better. The memory replacement was so Cagalli wouldn't blame her, right? And which kind of fear were they talking about? Other people's fear of her power, her own fear of her powers...or her parents fear of her powers?

As she was contemplating this, she heard a knock on her bedroom door. Blinking out of her reverie, Kira frowned. It was awfully late for anyone to come talk to her. Though, the confusion quickly faded when she heard a familiar voice from the other side.

"Hey Kira, open up!" It was Cagalli. Once she knew that, Kira couldn't go open the door to let her in fast enough.

"So, are you feeling loopy?" Standard question to make sure he was talking to an Awake Cagalli.

"Yeah and I'm looking for an Anchor." There was the usual response. Kira was able to see her just fine in the little amount of light that the stars and moon provided for the room. First thing she noticed was just how odd it felt for Cagalli to be a redhead. "It's been awhile...Sis."

Kira rolled her eyes at the tone used in "Sis". At least she wasn't trying to claim that she was still the elder sister when they clearly weren't born twins this time. "I'm curious about your loop memories. Do you recall anything out of the ordinary happening?"

"What do you mean?" Cagalli looked at her sister in confusion. "Is there something I should be remembering?"

A moment of silence passed before Kira held up a hand and formed a snowball in it. Cagalli was left flabbergasted.

"W-what?! How come I don't recall you being able to do that?!"

"Because of an accident when we were younger and not Awake.," the elder sister explained. "A blast of my magic hit you in the head as we were playing with it. Apparently, getting hit in certain places by ice magic will cause the affected person to freeze from the inside out. Also apparently, it's easier to heal when it was the head that was hit compared to when the heart is hit...Don't ask me how that works." Cagalli had opened her mouth to say something when Kira had said that last part. Taking a breath, the Anchor continued. "Anyway, they took you to see these little rock creatures they called Trolls. While healing your head, they decided to change your memories so you didn't know about my magic...because why not."

"Wait a minute!" the younger sister exclaimed. "Loop memories can be altered and/or falsified?!"

"It's not exactly a common occurrence. I mean, depending on the Loop, whether the memories you get are altered or not depends on when you Awaken. Other times, not so much," Kira stated with a shrug. "However, it's also not my first time encountering such a phenomenon. Which is why I was curious if you remembered what actually happened."

The currently redheaded Cagalli crossed her arms and frowned at the fact that her memories weren't what had they had done together. However, as she thought over which memories involved her and her sister, she pieced together the recollections most likely to be the altered ones. Once she had a rough estimate of which ones, she smirked.

"I only have one thing to say about this." She let the silence continue for a second to build up the tension. "Do you want to build a snowman?"

The return smile said more than words ever could.

Chapter 11

9.1

Flay Allster, Lacus Clyne, Mu La Flaga, Miriallia Haw and Natarle Badgiruel could only stare in rather horrified awe of the spectacle. A single man in a white gi was riding a missile around the battlefield they found themselves in. And wherever he went, destruction followed not long after. It didn't matter if it was a battleship or a Mobile Suit, they were wrecked. The only one who was being calm about the whole thing was their Anchor, Kira Yamato.

"So, explain to us again, how did this come about?" Mu asked while trying to keep his voice steady.

"Right, so...I was just walking towards the break room after our last battle. You know, needed to unwind a bit from the fighting." The brown haired young man shrugged. "Well, I ran into that man, Segata Sanshiro as he was leaving the room. He wasn't quite happy that it didn't have a Sega Saturn as part of its recreational pursuits. Thankfully, I had more than a few of those in my Subspace Pocket from the times I've been in a Hub-loop so I was spared a beating and spared the ship some remodeling."

At that point, one of the ZAFT battleships was somehow thrown into an opposing Earth Alliance vessel and caused both of them to explode...twice...each.

"Anyway, while that appeased him from harming me and the Archangel, it did give me an idea. So, I directed him to the oncoming ZAFT and EA fleets and told him that they didn't have Sega Saturns...along with suggesting that they didn't like them." An EA vessel flew head over heels passed the Archangel and added a sizable crater to the moon. That seemed to accentuate his explanation rather aptly.

"Well, at least Chuck Norris isn't here, so our Universe shouldn't collapse." Natarle stated with a weary shake of her head. "So, we now have a Sega Saturn in our rec room? Does it have a multitap?"

"I have all the accessories," was Kira's answer.

"Right...I call Player one!" The second in command of the Archangel declared as she broke out running. This was met by a couple cries of No Fair as her fellow Loopers chased after her.

9.2

Gundam SEED/Black Lagoon

"Flay, could you put me down? I think you're crushing something." The brown haired Kira Yamato has replaced the pacifistic salary man turned mercenary, Rokuro "Rock" Okajima. As it had turned out, his looping love interest Flay Allster had joined him as replacement for Rock's maybe-maybe not girlfriend Revy. While he admitted that she looked good in the outfit that Revy always wore, the fact that she also had the mercenary woman's build while he wasn't exactly in the fittest condition the loops could give him...He was pretty sure the phrase Love Hurts wasn't supposed to refer to that.

"Eep, sorry." The redhead let go of her love interest and he fell onto the nearby couch. After making sure he was undamaged, Kira looked over at her. Flay was currently feeling the arms and legs not covered by her outfit, apparently amazed at how firm they are. "I don't really work out much from what my loop memories tell me, but man, look at me. I'm built like a freaking brick-house!"

Suddenly, they were interrupted by the apartment door opening. A heavyset, bald, black guy and a much smaller bespeckled blonde guy in a Hawaiian shirt and shorts with a small amount of stubble on his face walked in. The loopers' memories gave them the names Dutch and Benny respectively.

"Kira, Flay. We've got a job offer." Dutch stated without much preamble.

"Okay, so what's the big deal here? Normally one of you would just call if it was for a job." Kira replied. His expression was one of seriousness and apprehension.

"It's not something we want to talk about where it can be easily overheard." In other words, very heavy and possibly dangerous stuff that many people in Roanapur would kill for was about to be dropped on the loopers. Most likely, not dangerous to them because Looper, but their friends didn't know that.

"That narrows it down, but don't beat around the bush about this." Kira wanted to know now. "How likely is this going to get us shot at by more than three groups?"

"At least five groups..." Barry replied before pulling something out of his pocket. He dropped it onto the coffee table between the two couches that served as seating in the apartment. It was a card key.

"Have you heard about Mountain Cycles?" Kira and Flay's eyes went wide with shock.

9.3

"Okay kid, what's this all about?" the blonde Mu La Flaga asked as all Awake Cosmic Era loopers sat in the same room as their Anchor. Said Anchor had a number of thick metal pendants bearing stylized Ws in his hands.

"I've been waiting until everyone was here for this. These come from a branch with a group called the Wonderful 101. They have some very fun technology in that branch and it took awhile to recreate these. I'll have to remember to make more when more Loopers appear." Kira Yamato, the Anchor, replied as he handed out the

pendants. "Now, it's easy enough to activate them. Just think the code and your code name."

"Code and code name?" Natarle Badgiruel questioned.

"Yes. The code is Wonder-Eyes and as for code names, I figured I'd let you guys pick yours rather than accept what I'd pick."

"Wonderize?" Miriallia asked.

"No, two words, Wonder...Eyes." Kira explained, pointing to his eyes for the second word. At the confused looks he was given, he shrugged, "Hey, I didn't choose it and the only reason I can come up with is the masks worn." At the unasked question that brought up, he sighed, "Alright, I'll demonstrate."

He stood up...and in a less time than it takes to blink, he went from his normal outfit to wearing a very stylized heavy jacket colored like his Freedom Gundam and matching pants. Over his face was a very big black domino mask that curved down to his cheeks and stuck out passed his temples. His eyes were covered by white screens. Then, apparently for the fun of it, he struck a heroic pose.

"I'm the Special Combat Agent, CENTINELS Planetary Secret Service, Heliopolis Field Office! Also known as...Wonder Freedom!" His girlfriends, Flay Allster and Lacus Clyne both laughed and clapped in enjoyment while the others either facepalmed or shrugged at how ridiculous and over the top the intro was. However, they all then looked down at the pendants he gave them and decided that it'd be fun, if the widening grins on their faces meant anything.

9.4

Gundam SEED/Metal Wolf Chaos

Cagalli wasn't sure who was Anchoring the loop, since she couldn't find her brother and no one else was responding to the Pings. She

was stuck with another political job and it was rather boring. At least, until the Vice President, Yuna Roma Seiren, declared a coup d'etat and was quickly taking over the USA. She wasn't quite sure why the heck the military was going along with it, but it was becoming increasingly clear that few people were going to be able to do anything to stop it. Her grin made it clear that she was one of those people who could.

"Are the preparations all set, Athrun?" Cagalli declared as she entered the room.

"It looks like a fancy party is about to start." He wasn't Awake, much to her disappointment. Still, it was a rather odd feeling that he was the noncombatant this time. "This kind of party is a first for me."

The spec-ops suit in question was a mostly blue, heavily armored, humanoid shell only around twice the size of a normal human. Definitely much smaller than the Mobile Suits she was used to piloting. The cockpit was in the chest and a rather tight fit. She changed out of her formal wear suit for a much more appropriate pilot suit. For weaponry, there were a pair of special container pods on the back of the shoulders that opened up to reveal four scaled up guns each for easy switch-out. Once she had finished bootup and made sure everything was functional, she turned towards the outside where the coup d'etat forces waited.

"Madam President." Her blue haired secretary finished. She just grinned out of sight in the cockpit of her machine.

"Metal Wolf, launching!" As Athrun ran out of the Oval Office to safety, the armored President blew the wall out and leaped through. "WOOOOOOHOOOOOO!"

The forces looked taken aback by the sudden arrival of the heavy armor dropping in. "Welcome to the White House!"

Kira was feeling very annoyed by the current loop. Everything else was the same; the Mobile Suits, the Bloody Valentine war, what he and his friends had been doing before Heliopolis was attacked...so why...

"This is beyond being a pain. How can this loop operate on such an insane variation?!" Nobody was Human this time around. Instead, they were mostly black colored birds with white or yellow on their neck and around their eyes with brightly colored beaks. "WHY ARE WE ALL TOUCANS!?"

9.6

Kira Yamato was used to waking up in strange situations, thanks to the Loops. Waking up as a teenager with access to heavily magical samurai armor and a pet white tiger wasn't even in his top twenty of the past thousand loops. In fact, this wasn't the first time he had Awoken in this particular branch. Sure, it meant he had to take on an ancient warlord who ruled over a demonic netherworld who vowed to return one thousand years after his previous defeat. Said defeat left the warlord's armor behind, which was then split into nine separate armors...Of which, he currently had one in his possession.

He grinned at being back here. Taking down the warlord had become easy after doing it often enough. It practically became a vacation after that. However, he wasn't quite there yet, so...Oh look, some of the warlord's minions. Warriors dressed like ancient samurai surrounded him.

"Armor of Wildfire, Dao Jin!"

With a pose and flash of light, Kira's body was now covered fiery red metal samurai armor with white under-armor. Over his right shoulder were a pair of katana, though he had no idea why they were set up like that. Still, he drew them with ease and prepared his guard.

9.7

Kira Yamato sighed. It was time for another confrontation with Shinn Asuka during Operation Angel Down. The Archangel had become a threat that Durandal could no longer ignore if he wanted to continue his Destiny Plan. In addition, due to the death of the Destroy's pilot, Shinn had it out for him and had studied all of the Ultimate Coordinator's combat footage that ZAFT had to find his weak points. In baseline, Kira had been far more focused on rushing back to defend the Archangel than on defending himself from the Impulse.

Every time he was Awake, he never made that mistake again. The Archangel could handle itself for long enough that he can defeat the enemy in front of him before rushing to its aid. It had done that in baseline, so it should do that again too. Here was where Kira let out another sigh. It wasn't until the Loops began that he really understood just how much luck had been involved in his survival when he was just piloting the Strike. It took him a few times to get to dealing with multiple opponents of ace status or higher when they had proper coordination.

Shaking those thoughts from his head, the Ultimate Coordinator focused on the task at hand; defending the Archangel from ZAFT forces. There's some BuCUEs taking potshots at his home ship. He cut off some weapons here, sever a leg there...piece of cake. And then the main problem arrived.

Kira was well aware that his opponent was in no mental state to listen to him. That said, since he also knew that he wouldn't be holding back this time, a warning was called for. If only so he could say that he had warned him. Connecting to the ZAFT frequency was pretty much second hand by this time.

"Attention, Impulse pilot. I'm giving you just one chance to back away. Vengeance isn't worth your life." Even as he said it, Kira knew that it wasn't going to be accepted.

"Shut the hell up, bastard! What would you know?!" Shinn roared as he fired some shots while getting ever closer to the Freedom. Kira dodged them easily. He responded with a shot of his own, which Shinn dodged with a slight tilt of the head. Yup, just like baseline.

"...Fine then. I now consider you a threat," Kira declared as he brought all the ranged weapons of his Freedom to bear.

Now, here's where Shinn didn't quite think things through. His casual dodge needed two things to work right. The first was Kira only using his beam rifle or his other weapons focusing on one spot. The second was Kira being enough of a pacifist that he wouldn't take cockpit shots even with his life AND the Archangel in danger. With his focus solely on the machine in front of him, those two assumptions came crashing down hard as Kira deployed all of the Freedom's weaponry.

Now, normally the Full Burst was only used for crowd control to take out as many grunts as possible. Because against one machine, it was pretty much overkill to a major degree. Not only that, but Kira was aiming all of his weapons separately to force Shinn to dodge right into their line of fire when he couldn't block them with his shield. Shinn also didn't seem aware that Kira was still listening in as neither of them had shut down the comlink.

"SHIT! What the hell is this?! Some of these shots are aimed at my cockpit! It's like there's a different person piloting that damn thing! Is...Is he seriously trying to kill me?! Wait...'I now consider you a threat'. Damn it!" Well, he's got quite a mouth on him. Perhaps he should have taken the force in front of him more seriously. Even with his shield, he was taking hits and losing parts. Fortunately for him, he's avoided taking most of the hits that would penetrate his Phase Shift armor.

And then Kira got a lucky hit in. The Impulse's shield arm took a shot that the Phase Shift couldn't stop and was severed. Now with no shield, Shinn couldn't block the shots that were raining down on him anymore. Now, normally the damage the Impulse took would mean

that it couldn't return to home ship under its own power now that it was pretty much defenseless. After all, it had been reduced to just the chest by the relentless assault.

That's when Kira stopped attacking so he could see what the Impulse's pilot did next. It blew off the armor that covered the Core Splendor fighter so it could return to its home ship. The Freedom's pilot decided to not allow that. He caught the Core Splendor before it got too far away. It did prevent the Impulse from returning later in the battle, after all. In the meantime, Shinn could only sit and contemplate his failure. To have underestimated the Freedom and its pilot so badly...This was his utter and complete loss.

9.8

"What an exciting day it's been so far!" One of the talking heads exclaimed from the large desk he sat at with two other color commentators.

"Indeed it has and right now, the crowd is going wild in anticipation of the two fan favorite teams about to go head to head today. First up is Team ZAFT, consisting of the heart throb team leader Athrun Zala, his wingman with a major attitude Yzak Doule and suave, laid back jokester Dearka Elsman!" As they were introduced, a spotlight lit up to reveal them. They were dressed in their pilot suits with their helmets held underarm. They waved to the roaring crowd.

"And their opponents, ones that they've been clashing with for years. Give it up for Team Archangel!" The crowd seemed to get even louder, despite how ear shattering it was before. "Leading their charge is the team leader, the charming Hawk of Endymion Mu La Flaga! And as his wingmen, the twins of battle, Angel of Freedom Kira Hibiki and Lioness of Dawn Cagalli Hibiki!" Like with Team ZAFT, as each one was announced, a spotlight illuminated them. They too wore their pilot suits with helmet underarm.

"Regardless of who wins, this is going to be an epic clash of wills between the two teams. This will be the fourth major tournament that these two teams have clashed in, not to mention all the minor ones each individual member has butted heads. While their record has generally been even, it's been a recent trend for Archangel to take victories away from their engagements. Will they defeat Team ZAFT in this clash too?"

The six combatants put their helmets on as they took position. Six sets of eyes stared at their consoles as their machines got ready. A timer appeared on the main crowd screen, counting down the seconds til the battle started. 5...4...3...2...1...0!

"And the finals of the 20th US Starcraft team tournament HAS BEGUN!"

9.9

What are these Gundams you're thinking up? After they had initially connected their minds together, Kira, Flay and Lacus had to get used to the fact that, unless they were actively trying not to be, the trio of lovers were always in each other's minds. It had originally caused some problems because they weren't the only ones with such a power in their baseline and it really attracted unwanted attention from such people. Well, that plus they could interrupt each other during a moment when they required focus and throw them off. Kira's hit his head on something above it many times while tinkering with things and he's very glad they had many ways of healing injuries between the three of them because of all the times he had hurt a hand from bad timing.

Currently, he was mentally building blueprints for some unique Mobile Suits for his own personal use when the Swords given to him by Lacus aren't enough. It seemed like Flay and Lacus were awake and commenting on his designs.

This one looks rather bulky, doesn't it? All the unique features of the original G-weapons on one suit like that... Flay mentally hummed as she inspected the image she found in his head. It seemed to use the Strike as the base unit, but it had a Trikeros offensive shield on its right arm and on its back was the Buster's signature High-energy Rifle and Gun Launcher and the hardpoints for Striker Packs. From the Duel, it only took parts of the Assault Shroud for increased armor due to needing the shoulders and upper back clear for the Striker Packs. Finally, there were integrated beam sabers in all four limbs and a powerful beam cannon in the chest above the cockpit, which were designs taken from the Aegis.

A proof of concept, really. Finding a way to make all of these systems work together on a single Mobile Suit. Once I get that working right, I'll start working on the next step. His loves poured over the designs themselves, seeing the dozens of mental outlines he had as he compared how each Striker Pack would look on the Mobile Suit. Each time he found an problem in the placement of certain parts that prevented any Striker Pack from being used, he changed it and then repeated the process. Because of their long association with his thought processes, Flay and Lacus easily followed along and even gave suggestions for additional modifications.

With all of these weapons, Phase Shift and Mirage Colloid to maintain, what do you have planned for the power plant? Are you planning on making it run on standard compact batteries or is it going to be nuclear powered? Lacus asked as her mental projection hovered upside down while examining the blueprint.

In response, Kira mentally blew up the image to allow a far more detailed look into the framework. It was equipped with a First Bloody Valentine War nuclear engine and N-Jammer Canceler. The pair looking in on his designs got to see how the power distribution systems were setup to handle the load of its weapons, Phase Shift Armor and Mirage Colloid. It would be enough to support both the defense and stealth systems at the same time, though they did

wonder why he planned on a first war nuclear engine rather than a second war Hyper Deuterium one. Perhaps just to keep it all within the same general period?

If that's really just the first step, what's the end product going to look like? Flay inquired as she looked over towards the other design Kira was working on. As the first design returned to normal and then shrunk to show that it was out of focus, the second one enlarged to allow for inspection.

It...was big...really big. Not just a Mobile Suit that incorporated technology from all the other "Gundam" branches, but a dedicated support unit and a mostly autonomous battleship carrier that were also made from multiple baselines of tech. This...this project was going to take hundreds...no, thousands of loops to complete if it was just Kira and that's if he's lucky enough to get several fused loops and variants that last a great deal longer than roughly four to five years. Also, it required him to get enough fused loops with the other branches to get the material he needed to make the designs too.

Like Flay and Lacus were just going to sit by and let him do it all alone. Though, their initial method of helping involved making certain recommendations.

How about you clear out this part? That way we can extend the cockpit into a two seater! Was the redhead's first suggestion.

Do you have any idea what that would do to the power distribution balance? Besides, why do you think it needs a second seat? Kira asked in turn.

That's right, Flay. Don't be so greedy. Lacus admonished. *It needs a space for me too!*

Did I not just point out how much of a bad idea making such modifications to the design is? I'm working with limited amounts of space here! This isn't a gunpla, where you can add or remove things to fit your whim! Even with the current size the design calls for, I'll

just barely have enough room for everything I intend to use for this and keep the power flow from being overdrawn!

Then make it bigger! There are those Psyco Gundams and Destroys that are over forty meters tall! Why limit the size like that? Flay questioned.

Are you kidding me?! With the material that I'm going to be making it out of, I have to get everything perfect the first time around! Otherwise, that's a lot of time and resources wasted! And then I'd have to wait who knows how long in order to get more! As it is, this is the bare minimum I can get in order to make such a Mobile Suit and still keep it feasible!

Flay and Lacus shared a look, communicating without words even in this mentalscape where they can hear each other's thoughts. And then they tried a different angle.

What about the support units? You are planning to make those manual, right? And out of the same material as the main Gundam, correct? Lacus was in full serious mode now.

I was planning on them being remote controlled by me...You want to fly into battle with me? Why? The brown haired member of the trio asked with a lack of understanding.

Because we want to, Kira! We've been working hard to be able to stand beside you and cover for you when the fighting starts! Flay practically yelled as some frustration leaked through. *I know you want to keep us safe, because that's just the kind of person you are. But we're no longer the non-combatants we used to be! Even though we'll never reach your level, we can still watch your back on the battlefield and...*

And we'll be safest by your side, where you can watch over us. Please, Kira! Lacus finished. As much as he wanted to say no, he knew they were right. No single place was one hundred percent safe at all times. Even the much more heavily armed and armored battle

carrier he was designing to support this MS could be sunk and everyone on board killed without him being able to do anything to save them. So the safest place for them was near him where he could react to anything that could threaten them and they'd still be protected by all the defenses he planned for the support units too.

The Anchor sighed in resignation. *Alright alright, you win...I was going to include cockpits anyway.*

At that point, anything else he might have said was lost as his two girlfriends mentally dogpiled Kira for kisses and cuddles. The Awake Mu La Flaga suddenly did a spit-take on the other side of the ship. He really needed to strengthen his mental defenses again. Dang teenagers and their raging hormones.

Chapter 12

Gundam SEED/Megaman Battle Network

Kira didn't quite understand where he Woke up. He knew it on an instinctive level, but this space was far different from normal reality and it was throwing him off. Still, everywhere he went, these things that looked human-like quaked before him. Some attempted to attack him, along with more bestial things, but they merely bounced off the barrier that protected him. If he wasn't expecting it, he'd strike back on reflex and destroy the attacker. They weren't actually people, he could feel that much...but it was kind of unsettling regardless.

His mostly black body wore a brown cloak that hid at least half of his face and went all the way down to his ankles. It was highlighted by violet streaks here and there and his forearms and shins had large, bulky, golden armor. He had some kind of emblem on his chest, but it had a very nasty slash through it. Touching it caused him to feel a dull pain, but it faded quickly. He hadn't found a reflective surface yet, but he could feel an odd weight on his head like a helmet.

The looper didn't like this place. It was so dark and hostile, not even including the things attacking him; what an oppressive feeling. Since he didn't want to stay there, he headed towards areas that felt like the darkness and hostility was less. This eventually lead him to a much brighter space that didn't feel nearly as hostile, though there were still those strange bestial creatures that attacked him occasionally. Well, not just creatures...some kind of automated cannon kept shooting at him here. Whatever, his barrier protected against them too.

So, in this brighter place, what was he to do? For as long as he's been traveling, he hasn't yet felt hunger. He certainly didn't feel tired. Well, at least the humanoids weren't cowering before him. That was

definitely an improvement in Kira's book. Though... Oh, his in-loop memories. Er, why haven't they kicked in by now? He's been Awake for several hours now, at least.

Did the person he had looped in place of have amnesia? That's pretty much the only reason why he wouldn't have the memories, but he's looped into the place of such a being before and he could still remember a lot. Perhaps it was due to a difference in the kind? When he was the other amnesiac, he still remembered certain events and such, but he couldn't recall who he was. Here...it's all instinct.

"BASS?! What are you doing here?" A boy's voice reached his ears. Glancing over, he spotted a mostly blue humanoid...no, there was something more about this one. What the heck was it? There was a screen beside the humanoid, with a brown haired kid wearing a blue bandanna in it. On a seeming whim, Kira sent out a Ping. The two people he was looking at returned it.

"Bass, is that my name for this loop? For some odd reason, I haven't gotten my loop memories."

The boy and the humanoid looked at each other, rather surprised.

"Someone's taken Bass's place for the loop?" The boy on the screen asked.

"I think it's been mentioned to us before." The humanoid answered in turn.

"My actual name is Kira Yamato. I'm the Anchor of the Cosmic Era loop," He stated while turning to turned to face them fully. And then he bowed. "Nice to meet you."

At this point in time, Kira Yamato was very glad Cagalli and Lacus were Awake. His Proof was almost completed, thanks to his sister and lover bringing in their best engineering teams to assist. This was

the combination of all five original G-weapons, his Proof of Concept, the Unified Strike Gundam. He had wanted to do it by himself, for the challenge and all, but they wouldn't hear of it. Now, he wasn't quite sure how he felt about it. While he was still in charge of making it, he wasn't physically working on it.

Still, it did at least feel like work so it felt like something earned. That's what he was telling himself as he had to deal with yet another complaint from one of the engineers regarding the design. First time was about the connected battery network and how it was established on the inner frame. After that was a spat between a small group working on installing the beam sabers in the arms and legs; something about aperture angle is what Kira thought he heard before one of the head mechanics, Murdoch, got involved.

Problems arose when the implementation of Assault Shroud pieces on the main body conflicted with the back mounted beam rifle and gun launcher. To resolve it, the mechanics had to cut some of the armor to accommodate the weaponry. And then came the next design issue, what to do with the Trikeros shield when it came time to use the other hand carried weaponry?

Kira looked over the Trikeros blueprints he had on a nearby table, so the other engineers assisting him could see the designs too. Erica Simmons, an engineer Kira's worked with before to make the Natural-use OS, came up with the idea of making the shield connect to the arm on an integrated rail system to reposition it and then the handles could switch between being held for using the integrated weapons and not so the other weapons could be used. The younger Coordinator had no problem with that solution.

And so it went as the Unified Strike was built up; day by day, section by section, piece by piece. As the systems were installed, they were tested. The arms and hands worked as did the legs and feet. Intense particle blades formed perfectly from the integrated beam sabers. It vanished from sight when the Mirage Colloid engaged. Color was brought to the armor by Phase Shift after it was mounted. Things were coming along smoothly.

10.3a

Gundam SEED/Metal Gear

Kira Yamato Awoke in a very cold and wet place. It took a moment for him to realize that he was currently under freezing cold water. As he kicked towards the surface, he quickly started searching through his in-loop memories. Apparently, he was a spec ops soldier this loop; a living legend on top of that. And he was currently on assignment to slip into a military base that housed nuclear weapons for disposal purposes. Said base had also been hijacked by a rogue military unit called Foxhound, hence why he was infiltrating the facility.

He cleared the surface as quietly as he could to avoid attracting the attention of the guards. It looked like a storage dock, tons of metal cargo crates stacked on each other in rows. Beyond that, there wasn't much else to see due to somewhat poor lighting. However, due to the lighting around the cargo elevator, he could see a pair of soldiers talking with the leader of the hostile takeover. Thankfully, it wasn't Rau Le Creuset, the madman who caused all sorts of problems during the first Bloody Valentine war with his manipulations. Instead, it was a man a bit older than Kira currently was with longer black hair.

Personally, he does recognize him outside of his loop memories, but barely. Kira had been walking down a beach with Lacus after the first war when he passed by him. It wasn't until after many later loops that he learned the name of this person he kept passing by on that beach. Canard Pars, the only other being to survive the Ultimate Coordinator project though he was considered a failure. Any other person may have wanted to confront him after learning that, but Kira had shrugged it off since it didn't matter to him.

Anyway, it seemed that Yggdrasil had decided for them to face each other now. Kira thought he heard him say something about swatting some bothersome flies before the elevator started its ascent, but he

was too far away to be sure. Climbing out of the water and ducking behind a fuel tank, he contacted his superior officer as he was supposed to once he was through swimming.

"This is Strike. Colonel, can you hear me?" Kira said softly after turning his CODEC on. He wasn't quite sure how the implant could understand him, but if it worked, it worked.

"Loud and clear, Strike." An older male voice responded inside his ear. It was strong and sure, just what he expected from Colonel Campbell. In his loop memories, he and the Colonel had a long history together. "What's the situation?"

"Only way out is a cargo elevator and it just went up." The sneaking agent stated factually.

"Looks like you'll have to wait for it to come back down. I expected that there'd only be the one way out. Just make sure no one sees you before it returns," was the reply he got.

"I know." Kira responded. "They're armed and I'm not. I'm not even supposed to let them know I'm here anyway."

"Sorry about that. Your Sneaking Suit is so you won't get hypothermia. There isn't many options for carrying guns through subarctic water when everything is devoted to keeping you alive." A woman's voice came over the radio. Kira immediately identified her as Naomi Hunter, the doctor who was in charge of his health for the mission.

"I'm not complaining. Better alive than not." The infiltrating soldier stated with a shrug. "Anyway, I'll contact you again after I'm on the elevator."

"Good luck, Strike." Campbell stated.

Gundam SEED/Star Wars

So, we're having another fused loop with the Cosmic Era. I wonder if Kira's here. I haven't seen him Awake since we made those Tryon 3 Gundams. Were the thoughts of one Anakin Skywalker, currently Darth Vader. He was currently on his way to have a talk with the Princess/his daughter, Cagalli Organa, and judging by the speed of the return Ping, she was Awake. When he had pinged earlier, he had received a few but only one was possibly within the Death St...er, Death GENESIS.

He dismissed the guards when he reached the cell holding said princess. This was going to be their first meeting in person and he wanted to keep it private. Opening the door, he stepped inside and closed it again. The first thing he noticed was her blonde hair, somehow a combination of her normal short hair and Leia's buns. He immediately chalked it up to Yggdrasil's humor.

"Are you properly Awake, Princess?" The black clad Sith Lord asked of his captive.

"Yes, though I've been feeling quite Loopy." She replied in an incredibly bored tone as she stood up from the bed. "This is my first time in this place and already I hate it. I had just been contemplating how best to break out when I felt the pings."

"No worries there. We'll be hijacking this place soon enough. Allow me to officially introduce myself. I am Anakin Skywalker, and sometimes Darth Vader. Pleasure to make your acquaintance." Vader stated with a bow.

"I know. Kira showed me the Hub movies awhile back." She replied with a bow of her own. "My name is Cagalli Yula Athha. The pleasure's all mine."

"Well Kid, nice to see you again." The Awake Han Solo said to a young man with short brown hair and violet eyes as they were sitting in the leisure area of the Millennium Falcon.

"You too, Han. Did you have anything planned for the Hutt empire this loop?" Said young man, Kira Skywalker, in return.

"Nope. Go nuts. Anything you got for trade?" The Corellian asked conversationally.

"Hmm. I just might..." Kira pulled out a box of cigars. "I know you don't smoke, but I also know you could name your price for some of these."

Han took a cigar out of box and examined it. After a moment, he put it back and said, "High quality stuff you got there."

"Yup, Rapture originals I got from a fused loop way before we met." Kira closed the box.

"You had these the first time we made a deal and you held them back? Nice. I suppose this is the part where we talk shop."

10.5

"Run that by me again?" the Awake Mu La Flaga asked of Kira. The Anchor smiled before doing so.

"So, how I was thinking of preventing the Break The World incident this time is this. I made a number of Striker Packs based on a Gundam from the After War loop. It had this weapon called the Satellite Cannon, powerful enough to destroy a space colony in one shot."

"On a Mobile Suit?! That's crazy! How'd they succeed with that?" The blonde pilot was shocked that just one Mobile Suit could have such power.

"It's rather ingenious really. They kept the power supply separate from the Gundam and made it so only certain people could send the signal to get that power sent to the MS by microwave from a base on

the Moon. The Mobile Suit is specifically shielded against it while also having collectors to absorb the energy. Then, once it has enough, the pilot pulls the trigger and..."

"Okay, so I'm assuming you have a way to imitate the Moon base's microwave system. Then you take your Strike and I take my Windam and we atomize that piece of space debris?"

"Exactly, though not perfectly. Since the base was stationary on the Moon, they got around that by making a bunch of satellites to bounce the microwaves off. One of those survived the war that had happened at the time and was modified to emit its own beam. The only flaw with that is the satellite could only produce a microwave beam at thirty percent of the power the Moon base could. Additionally, the Satellite System on the Strikers won't be able to fire in succession, the MS just doesn't have the proper cooling systems."

"Now I see why you want me to assist you. Two shots at thirty percent is better than one." Mu commented. "Still, aren't we going to need to shield our Mobile Suits from the microwave?"

Kira grinned, "Way ahead of you."

"I know you couldn't modify our Mobile Suits quickly, but is this really the best solution?" Mu asked in his aluminum foil covered Windam. They had gotten the Awake Natarle to take them up into space with one of her copies of the Dominion. They were now staring straight at the several kilometers long piece of a former PLANT with the microwave satellite behind them, as Kira had set the receiver on the Striker Pack with the collectors.

"Don't worry about it. Sending the activation signal... Now!" The Satellite came to life, sending a beam that connected to the Striker Packs' receivers. This confirmed the location to send the beam to as well as ensure a path for the microwave. Once it confirmed the location, it sent the beam, bathing the two MS in light as the collectors soaked up the energy. A special gauge that the Striker Packs put on the main screen's HUD showed the charge level.

Once it stopped filling up around thirty percent, Kira said, "Alright, on the count of three. Ready?"

Mu tensed as Kira counted down. "One... Two... THREE!"

Two massive beams launched from the two cannons, though not nearly as big as they were supposed to be. The lances of pure plasma shot down and burrowed into the massive structure below them. They didn't go entirely through the humongous piece of debris, but Kira and Mu already knew the beams weren't strong enough to do the job in one shot. So they were merely setting up for the final shot from the Dominion's Positron Blaster Cannons. If they could punch enough holes in the former colony, then the pieces would just burn up in the atmosphere.

"Alright boys, you can take a rest now. Crewman Allster, whenever you're ready!" Captain Natarle ordered all official like even though it was just them. She just loved getting to play Captain.

"Yes ma'am! Lohengrins One and Two, in position and charging. Ready to fire in thirty seconds!" The redhead love interest of the Anchor replied back. As they waited, an alert triggered.

"Captain!" Lacus, Kira's other love interest, spoke up from the radar station. "Incoming GINNs, they identify as High Maneuver Type II! Either they're earlier than expected or we've spent way too much time up here trying to break up the remains of Junius Seven."

"Ma'am!" Flay spoke up. "Allow me to sortie!"

"Granted, Flay! I'll handle the defense and Lohengrins, just stop those GINNs!" Natarle shouted back as she bounded over towards the weapons station.

"Alright, Mu! Ready your Divider! We must protect the Dominion until they're in the clear to fire." Kira declared as his Satellite Cannon returned to inactive position. The Strike reached behind it and pulled an ovoid shield from where it was anchored to the Striker Pack.

"No need to tell me twice, Kira!" The blonde man stated confidently as he did the same as his partner. "The Hawk of Endymion is on the hunt! These terrorists are going down!"

10.6 - Harosata

Gundam SEED/Assassination Classroom

Kira Woke up in the classroom that has seen better days. Not as a student, but as a teacher. He looked human, but still...

"Waking up from your trip?" The man in the suit asked him.

"Yeah, just feeling a little Loopy." Kira looked around. "Where am I exactly, Mister...Karasuma?"

"Take a 15 minute break outside." Once the students obeyed and left, Karasuma decided on the simple truth. "You're replacing Koro-Sensei."

Kira blinked. "The yellow alien thing?"

"I'm pretty sure the memories of how he came to be are locked up tightly, but he was born human." Kira almost banged his head on the desk as Karasuma gave a silent apology. "What will the lesson plan be?"

Kira looked up. "Come again?"

"Seeing as Koro-Sensei replaces a teacher in another world, it's not farfetched that the same teacher will replace Koro-Sensei. Fortunately, some of us are Awake, so unless you prove to be an actual threat, we either fake your death or you agree to teach here." Karasuma plucked a knife and bent it like rubber. "Just don't expect this to be an easy job."

Kira shrugged. "I guess I can teach something. How hard can it be?"

Koro Yamato hoped his disguise was good enough to fool the soldiers, though it seems like the pink-haired songstress was beginning to suspect him.

"Haro Haro?"

10.3b

Gundam SEED/Metal Gear

In that mostly dark cargo area, it was easy enough to slip by the guards. Heck, it didn't look like they had night vision or even thermal goggles so they could spot anyone who sneaked in. That seemed a strange oversight. Was this place not deemed important enough? No, one of the leaders of this hostile action was just here. There's something more going on.

He then heard the alarm that meant the elevator was moving. Another guard stepped off when it stopped. After waiting several seconds for him to walk clear and the other guards to pass by, Kira took the opening and sprinted to the elevator. He only relaxed after the large platform began its upwards journey. Now that he wasn't in any immediate danger, he took stock of the situation.

Let's see, Subspace Pocket check. Kira thought as he attempted to pull out a weapon to defend himself. When he couldn't, he attempted to send the parts of his suit that he no longer needed into it. As they disappeared, he thought to himself, *So, it's deposit only this loop? Oh well. I'll have to make due with what I find here.*

Several moments later, the elevator arrived at the top. The first thing that stuck out to Kira was the helipad and the helicopter currently sitting on it. He contacted Colonel Campbell.

"Colonel, they apparently have some help 'From Russia with Love'. There's a Hind here."

"That's worrisome. Hopefully, you won't have to fight it. As you are right now, you're defenseless. All weapons must be procured onsite."

"I know, I know. Standard Foxhound policy." Kira whispered into his CODEC.

The cold weather Sneaking Suit clad agent watched Canard get into the Helicopter and lifted off.

"He must be incredibly confident in his skills as a pilot to go out in a helicopter while it's snowing...or he's certifiably insane," a voice familiar to Kira came as he received a Ping. He answered it and oddly got another one at the same time. The other one was rather close. Anyway, back to the voice.

"Who was that?" Kira asked, though he already knew.

"Oh, sorry. I didn't have time to introduce you two before. This is Natarle Badgiruel, Data Analyst and the one responsible for your Soliton Radar and CODEC. You can save your mission data with her." Campbell replied, somewhat embarrassed.

"Nice to meet you, Strike. Hope I didn't knock you for a Loop." Natarle said as introduction.

"Nah, I'm well Anchored. I look forward to working with you." The spec ops soldier stated.

"As do I."

"If you want to contact her later, the frequency is 180.96." Colonel Campbell informed Kira helpfully.

"Got it."

10.7

"Kira, how long have you been planning this?" The Awake Mu La Flaga asked the question that every present Looper had in their heads as they stood outside on the Archangel's deck in pilot/normal suits. Said Anchor had a large scoreboard with the names of pretty much every person he suspected of eventually Looping. Oddly, that even included Gilbert Durandal...Well, if he did start looping, he'd most likely be like Xanatos or Lelouch. He was a nice person at heart, just a manipulative/magnificent bastard chess master in fulfilling the goal that he thought was necessary to save humanity.

"I initially did it alone some loops because of how bored I was getting, but it just didn't feel right without having someone to do it with. You know, have company to chat with. So, ever since Natarle started looping, I've been making this board for when I have enough people." The people who weren't looping disappeared from the board as it shrunk down. It then popped up a map of the current course... which was a debris field they were passing near. At the same time, Kira pulled a golf club bag from his Subspace Pocket. "So, who wants to go first?"

When one Murrue Ramius had gone to bed in the arms of her lover, Mu La Flaga, after the Second Bloody Valentine War had ended, she expected a lot of things. Coming to awareness back in the captain's chair of the Archangel during the First Bloody Valentine War was not one of them. That wasn't even the strangest part. Apparently, the ship's pilots, her second in command, two crewmen and one guest were all playing golf off the two "legs". Where the heck did they even get a golf bag full of clubs anyway?

Stranger still was the fact that she knew that they'd been doing this for several days now... and they've all pulled Mobile Suits out of nowhere to pilot during ZAFT attacks. Currently, the Archangel was on Earth, flying over the Sahara Desert where they fought with the Desert Tiger, Andrew Waltfeld. This was highly irregular. Good thing there wasn't going to be a battle today...wait, how'd she know that?

Murrue rubbed her forehead. It was like she had two sets of memories and the inconsistencies between them made them

mutually exclusive. So, was this real or was this the dream and the other set of memories was real? This wasn't going to be quick or easy to answer... and she really wanted to take some aspirin and get some sleep.

"Neumann, take over for the shift. I need to deal with a headache." The brown haired former engineer said as she stood up from the Captain's chair.

"Yes, ma'am!"

"Hey, you alright?" Mu La Flaga asked as he entered the Captain's quarters, "I heard you had a headache."

Said Captain was lying down on her bed, arm over her eyes to keep out any light. Upon hearing Mu's voice, she lifted it just enough so she could look at him before setting it back down.

"Yeah, it was rather sudden, but I'll be alright once the medication takes effect."

"If you don't mind me asking, what brought it on?"

Murrue sighed, "It's not something I really understand myself. Was it just a strange dream I had? But I recall it so clearly... a second war."

Mu paused as realization seemed to hit home. It took a few moments for him to recollect himself.

"Murrue," The fact that he used her given name and the tone he did it with... Murrue looked at him again. "Does it feel like you've gone back in time?"

That caused her to sit up quickly, which just aggravated her headache. However, she pushed that aside for now. He knew what was going on?

"Yes, you could say that. I had lost you and then you came back."

"Murrue," the blond called quietly. He took a step into the room and the door closed behind him.

Gundam SEED/Starcraft

"Lacus, honey! How have you been? Been lonely without me?" A brown haired man said to a pink haired woman with a cybernetic right eye on the other side of the screen.

"Oh, Kira sweety! I've been fine and don't worry, you're the only one in my thoughts at night and my bed's lonely without you!" Said woman replied like it was the most natural response. Off to one side, James Raynor and the Protoss Zeratul watched with some humor.

"A complete difference from young Matt Horner's attitude to Mira." The old Nerazim stated jovially.

"And they aren't even Awake this time. In fact, I'd prefer it if they did Wake up soon. At least then, they'd be subtle about it. These ones always act like newlyweds." Jim returned with a shake of his head.

Vacation Chapter

Kira rather liked when he wasn't alone in a loop, especially if there was enough to declare it a vacation loop. Cagalli set it up this time, with him and some others gathering up everyone who they knew caused problems during the two wars and the downtime between. Once they were all in one spot, his twin sister vented some built-up frustration by using her custom Metal Wolf mecha to rampage through them. And then she promised that anyone who showed up to fill the gap and try to make trouble would be dealt with by her.

So, with that as the start of their vacation, Kira, Flay and Lacus used their combined funds to book a flight to the swankiest resort they knew of. Nothing but sun, sand, surf, relaxation and the most expensive food in the world. No expenses spared for this break period. And they were going to stay there for months! It's not like it even made a dent in their overall budgets.

So, after the trio got all settled into their deluxe suite, they dressed up for a day at the beach. They also packed as much food as they could for their time there... Breakfast, lunch, perhaps even dinner if it lasted long enough. Ever since they had looped outside of their baseline, they had bigger appetites. Probably from the energy expended from their new powers.

Anyway, it was early enough that there wasn't much of a crowd so they got a good spot close to the water. The umbrella staked down, their towels spread out and food ready to eat...this was going to be the start of a good vacation!

Hours later, the trio of lovers was reminded that not all loops were going to let him relax and have a nice vacation without some effort... which generally defeated the purpose of taking such a break. It started out coincidental enough. A couple of punks came up to the lovely ladies and tried to pick them up. When a straight No didn't get

them to leave, the girls let them know that they were already accounted for as Kira came over. They probably should have just taken the punks out... Would have saved Kira the effort.

Now, these were muscular punks and judging by their hair colors, Coordinators to boot. Any normal person would have been within their rights to fear them. However, even before he started looping, Kira wasn't any normal person. No flashy abilities, nothing pulled from the Subspace pocket... He just laid them out with a solid punch each.

So, with that small annoyance out of the way, the trio settled down at their spot to eat lunch. As they were eating, however, problem number two came up. Only this time, they weren't going to be able to deal with it by knocking it out. This time, it was Lacus fans!

Kira and Flay had to run interference to keep the unexpected mob from overwhelming Lacus. They were demanding autographs and personal photos. By the time they had all been appeased and dispersed, it was nearly dinner time. That had managed to be quiet enough as they ate what was left of their food. Still, the relaxing mood had been shattered for the day. They discussed simply packing up and returning to their hotel room until tomorrow. Yggdrasil had apparently decreed that they needed to work for their vacation some more.

The beach crowd was mostly dispersing as the day was waning. This meant that there wasn't many people to get in the way of a rapidly approaching jeep. There were cries of "There she is!", "Get her!' and "Run her over!" as it kept getting closer, bearing down right on them. The trio leaped out of the way, causing the jeep to skid on the sand as it tried to turn around. Once it did, they saw the main target of the attackers, Lacus Clyne. They didn't know why, but they didn't care now.

While Kira and Lacus were busy dodging, Flay pulled out a suit of Umbran Armor from her time as an Umbra Witch. Once she got on it,

she boosted forward and knocked the jeep over with a kick before pumping it full of bullets. After she was finished, the Umbran Armor sank back into her Subspace Pocket as she rushed over to her lovers.

"You guys alright?" When the pair nodded to her, Flay continued, "What the heck was that all about?! Were they Blue Cosmos?"

"Well, I am a famous Coordinator, so I wouldn't be surprised," Lacus stated as she tried to ignore the wreckage.

Kira looked sadly at their destroyed beach umbrella, the ruined towels and squashed beach bag. With a sigh, he said, "It doesn't look like we'll be able to continue beach going today. Let's just go back to the hotel."

Of course, it wasn't that simple. For whatever reason, several more attempts like the first one were made. A second jeep came barreling at them once they reached the first street from the beach; Flay blew it up with a Dubstep gun. Then a third one tried two streets later; Kira cut it in half with a Lightsaber. And finally, a fourth one tried their luck just outside the hotel; Flay managed to beat Kira to that one with her copy of Bardiche.

They weren't exactly tired, but the events of the day certainly taxed them. This was supposed to be an vacation... And they were all doing their best to avoid thinking about what else could go wrong. Well, whether they thought it or not, it was going to happen.

The trio's suite was huge and unbelievably fancy; almost as big as the entire orphanage they usually helped run. It had a bathroom with both a shower stall large enough for at least nine and a bathtub big enough to sit at least five. Four super king-size beds sat in the bedroom area, which was down the hall from its own personal lounge with two couches and six chairs with a complete entertainment center with four 72 inch screens and a collection of arcade cabinets in a different section of the room. This lounge was

connected to a fully stocked kitchen and a fully-sized bar, complete with pool table.

The dining room sat eight at the main table and possessed huge double windows that lead to a lovely view of the beach. Across the hall from the dining room was a fully equipped gym. Dotting this suite were spiral staircases leading to the roof where an Olympic-sized swimming pool shimmered in the light of dusk. Next to it was a pair of hot tubs capable of seating a dozen each without anyone touching. And finally, on the end of the pool nearest the beach was the suite's own helipad.

Kira, Lacus and Flay certainly got what they paid for. Currently, Flay had taken up some nine-ball at the pool table with Kira while Lacus was trying her hand at a shooter arcade. The pink-haired songstress was surprisingly good at it. In any case, they passed the hours away as they let themselves make up for the relaxation they missed at the beach. By the time they decided it was time to sleep, they had been watching a movie while snuggling on the couch. So, once the movie was over, they all got up and prepared for bed.

Because of the attacks earlier in the day, they were going to share a bed. They had learned to be light sleepers thanks to the loops, but they didn't want to take chances. Who knows what kind of crazy scenarios they were going to face during this attempt at vacation. So of course, someone attempted a stealthy break-in. Half a dozen black clad figures came down the spiral stairs and spread out.

One of them made their way to the bedroom, a silenced pistol loading a round as its user racked the slide. He spotted three lumps in the bed and assumed that one of them was the main target. Taking slow aim, the would-be assailant fired one shot before quickly targeting the other two lumps in succession. Once sure of the kill, the assassin turned the light on to confirm it. He didn't get more than a second to see that there was no blood on the bed before a kick right to the face knocked him out.

Seriously?! We just wanted to have a nice, long vacation in a way we haven't before. So why the heck are we suddenly so popular?! Kira mentally ranted in frustration. Flay and Lacus shared a look of worry. They had been wondering that too and some of the possible answers they came up with were distressing enough.

Most likely answer we can think of is; now that the leaders are gone, Blue Cosmos is dissolving into anarchy and is merely targeting any high profile Coordinator they can find, Flay thought back.

And we really didn't see this the other times we did so because we still tried to keep out of the limelight. Now that we've planned this big, expensive vacation, there's a giant bull's eye on us. The male of the trio sighed. *So, how do we take the rest down without killing them or making a mess?*

I looped into Pokemon recently as a Jigglypuff and later evolved into a Wigglytuff. Using a song to put them to sleep should work, Lacus gave as her idea.

Oh. Why didn't we think of that? Both Kira and Flay wondered. They did share mental links so they generally knew each other's memories, though the trio also tried to avoid delving too deeply.

Do you have to sing it as the Pokemon do? Flay asked curiously. Lacus blinked a bit before smiling and shaking her head no. The redhead looked a bit disappointed.

Lacus took a deep breath, reaching into herself for the power she could feel was still there. It started slow and without lyrics, moving through the scales as a warm-up. Once she was fully ready, she chose her song and began singing.

"The night time fills the sky

Stars alive go floating by

So still the evening air

So warm and soft

is everywhere"

Kira and Flay smiled at the gentle lullaby. They've heard it countless times before. The power inside the sound that reached their ears beckoned them to sleep, though they were able to resist easily enough. Her voice slowly filtered through the suite, drawing the attention of the invaders. Upon hearing the voice of their target, they quickly assumed that their fellow had failed. As they moved in to finish the job, they felt their eyes start to droop.

"I see a world in harmony

A world of peace and Humanity

Where people walk free

Like water in a stream

Flowing on forever more"

They tried to fight it, but it was a losing battle. One by one, five bodies fell to the ground as unconsciousness took them. Snoring soon followed, signalling that the trio was now safe from the assassins. Lacus let her song trail off. Flay caught her in a hug.

"That was awesome, Lacus!" A blush spread on the pink-haired singer's face from the hug and compliment. Kira didn't waste any time, pulling out some lengths of cord to tie up the intruders. During this time, he also searched them for anything other than their guns. He'd have taken those too, but they needed some evidence for the staff.

The following week of assassination attempts annoyed the trio as they tried many ways to enjoy their vacation; shopping, exotic restaurants, water shows, amusement parks, movie theaters... All

targeted in some way or another. And in each and every case, the local security wasn't able to get there until after they had dealt with the problem. They were probably just being unnecessarily stubborn, but they wanted a vacation! Now it was a race to see who would give up first, the seemingly endless supply of assassins or the Loopers.

And honestly, they seemed to get less subtle and a bit more contrived as the days went on. This wasn't helped by almost all of them saying the Blue Cosmos motto as they came into view.

Street thugs attacking them in the local store's dairy section? "For the preservation of our Blue and Pure World!"

Clerk trying to knife them in the lingerie shop? "For the preservation of our Blue and Pure World!"

Pipe bomb on the dinner plate of a swanky restaurant? "For the preservation of our Blue and Pure World!"

Concealed waterproof pistol on the water show performer? "For the preservation of our Blue and Pure World!"

Park mascot pulling out a drum magazine Thompson SMG? "For the preservation of our Blue and Pure World!"

Linear Tank rolling into the drive-in movie theater? "For the preservation of our Blue and Pure World!"

The trio was almost certain that there was little that could top that last one in terms of contrived circumstances. This was also on top of two more black ops attempts in their hotel suite. They were almost begging for another swarm of Lacus fans to be the next encounter. Why couldn't these Blue Cosmos fanatics go for anything subtle? Like poison, they could ignore poison!

Now, they were marking off places they could no longer visit to avoid repeat attacks... and due to collateral damage. Because of this, their options for enjoying their vacation were dwindling fast. After going

over said options, they decided on a walk through the resort's nature park. The wide open area would allow them to see any threat coming, as they were really doubting that these constant daytime assailants were subtle enough for sniper attacks.

"This was... good idea," Flay mumbled as she hugged Kira's arm and leaned her head on his shoulder. She had volunteered to take on the last black ops team so Kira and Lacus could sleep, thus was tired from the effort they took and from low amounts of sleep.

"Agreed," Lacus sang while she took in the scenery. Palm trees dotted the slightly bumpy grassland with sidewalks spiderwebbing around the park with a lake in the center. "Certainly a better choice than the casino."

"Though we may have to go there next if something bad happens here," Kira pointed out. "Not really what I would consider relaxing."

"New ex...perience," Flay stated softly. She was really out of it. Lacus quietly giggled at her friend's condition.

As the trio began walking passed the lake, three different points erupted into geysers. The sudden and unexpected noise snapped Flay out of her tired stupor as they all looked towards the ruckus. Standing in the middle of the lake were three Forbidden Blue Atlantic Federation amphibious Mobile Suits. The seventeen and a half meter tall MS were colored blue by their Trans-Phase Armor and had wide backpacks with upside down drop-shaped shields on either side.

"HOW THE HELL DID THEY HIDE IN THE LAKE WITHOUT ANYONE NOTICING?!" Kira raged at the sheer improbability of this stunt. The MS loudspeakers then blared.

"FOR THE PRESERVATION OF OUR BLUE AND PURE," A rain of bullets penetrating into the engine block of the Forbidden Blue in front, accompanied by the revving of a gatling gun, cut off the would-be attackers mid-speech. The furious stream of slugs knocked out

the left machine's battery as well before turning on the remaining MS. In mere moments, all three of them had been disabled and left to collapse back into the lake, grey without the improved Phase Shift.

Kira and Flay were left more than a bit dumbstruck by the quick anticlimax, turning their eyes to the one responsible. Lacus was holding an impressive minigun about half her size; gunmetal grey inlaid with stained mahogany and the Communism symbol on the ammo drum.

"That was therapeutic," She declared while returning it to her Subspace Pocket with an annoyed huff. Feeling her lovers' eyes on her, she looked back at them. Now feeling a bit sheepish, she asked. "It was my turn, wasn't it?"

Yeah, it's a short chapter this time. Not much to really say about that.

Chapter 14

Murrue wasn't quite sure what Natarle wanted when the Lieutenant asked for them to talk alone the day after she and Mu had some private time. The Captain had never known the raven-haired officer to be obviously nervous about anything, but just by looking at her now, it was clear that she was.

"You wanted to talk with me, Natarle?" Murrue asked with a reassuring smile.

"Captain!" The nervousness instantly vanished the moment her second-in-command became aware she was in the room.

"Now now, no need for any formalities here. We're friends, right?" Natarle looked a bit surprised by that statement, but then relaxed.

"Of course, Murrue. Still, while it was a long time ago for me, for you, our time as enemies was recent. For that, I am here to apologize," Natarle formally bowed, even though it wasn't part of her military training. "Even if you would have forgiven me regardless of my asking for it, I would rather it be aired out now than let it sit unresolved for centuries."

"I understand," Murrue returned with a smile. "So, if you're feeling better, how about we go get some coffee? I think we have the beans on board for a blend Andrew Waltfeld taught me."

Natarle righted herself and had a small smile herself, "Sure. I'd like that."

"So, everyone knows the rules?" Kira called over the comm to the other Loopers. His Perfect Strike was facing a Gunbarrel Strike, a Strike Rouge IWSP and a Strike Rouge Ootori.

"Capture the G-weapons intact, no swapping out for new Striker Packs, only the weapons we take with us are allowed," Mu La Flaga parroted back what had been determined earlier. "And finally, whoever kills Rau Le Creuset gets to pick tonight's movie."

"Everyone get that?" Everyone acknowledged, "Good! Anyone breaks a rule, they lose their Gundam privilege for the loop!"

Suddenly, the alert blared throughout the ship. Murrue's voice followed, "All hands, Level One Battlestations!"

"And that's our cue," Kira stated, before noticing that he was now facing a mostly empty hanger.

"Mu La Flaga, Gunbarrel Strike, launching!" He heard over his comm.

"Flay Allster, Strike Rouge Ootori, launching!" Quickly followed after Mu.

"Cagalli Yula Athha, Strike Rouge IWSP, launching!" Came the last one.

Kira sighed as his Strike got on a catapult, "Gee, thanks for waiting guys... Kira Yamato, Perfect Strike, launching!"

11.3a

"Are you serious, Kid?" Mu La Flaga had, at times, questioned the sanity of the Cosmic Era Anchor. This was one such time.

"What's the problem with the Dreadnought Striker?" Kira asked in reply. He was currently floating beside a relatively large addition to his Strike; a white, pyramidal ring structure mounted on the Striker Pack hard-points. On the ring closest to the MS were eight lance-like pods sticking out like points of a star while on the next ring was an

array of smaller, triangular devices. Finally, between those two rings and on the last ring were several large thrusters.

"Well, doesn't it seem rather... excessive?" Was the response he got.

"I suppose it is," Kira admitted. "I've used this Striker several times before and never needed to use more than half of the remote weapons at a time. But that doesn't mean I didn't use the other half."

"Let me guess, you've used that during the second battle of Jachin Due?" If there was ever a battle big enough during the first war to warrant that Striker Pack, it'd be the final battle. By the sound of it, Kira staggered his usage of the remote weapons so that one set was recharging while the other set did the fighting.

"And when I rescued the Eternal," the young Coordinator added.

"Now that's just overkill," Mu shook his head wearily.

"They were threatening Lacus," Kira stated with a twinge of anger.

"Kid," The blonde man opined after a moment of silence, "you'd make a very frightening enemy."

"I'll take that as a compliment."

An alert blared through the ship. Looked like it was time for a battle.

"All hands, Level One Battlestations!"

11.4

"Kira... Please tell me this isn't one of your designs," Natarle almost begged. She had decided that she'd take the pilot's path this loop so she had come down to the hanger to talk shop. It was hard not to notice his current choice of MS, especially given the crowd of mechanics working to make sure it was functioning properly.

"It's not. Didn't even need to recreate this one," Kira stated from the cockpit. Currently, he was optimizing the OS so he could actually use everything. By recreate, he meant that he had pulled it out of his Subspace Pocket fully assembled. That was something of a blessing, considering he's taken to trolling the hanger crewmen by making Mobile Weapons appear with the parts just laying around for them to complete. He does at least leave notes letting them know it's him and frankly it's happened often enough this loop that the crewmen just shrug it off by now.

"And you're actually thinking of trying to pilot it? I know you're a Coordinator and incredibly old, but this thing is," Natarle shook her head at the ridiculously overloaded Astray. Kira interrupted her before she got much further.

"I know, I know. It's a mess and that's being polite. Still, I'm using it as training."

"For what, multitasking in battle?!" The Lieutenant practically shouted.

"Among other things," he returned casually. Pausing in his task, the pilot looked up at his superior officer. "I'm reaching the point in my skill where I can literally fight with any standard Mobile Suit in my sleep. I usually don't because it's still very dangerous, but it's got me thinking. Just how far can my ability to pilot go? At what point could my unconscious body be plopped down into a cockpit and still wipe the floor with even experienced loopers?"

Natarle nodded, "I quite understand. I've spent quite a bit of time in loops where people run around shooting each other with lethal weaponry, only to get 'respawned' and continue the fight. At this point, the only challenge I get from those places are when there's another looper in with me. So, you're fine with pushing your skills as a pilot so far?"

"I've pretty much got a doctorate in everything and have mastered every martial art I've come across. I can name Pi down to the one

hundred thousandth point. I can sing classic opera from countertenor to bass. I can dance anything you could name with my eyes closed. There's more there, but you should get the point."

"And to think, the O7 have most likely done all that and more." Natarle was now very thankful that loopers had each other to stay... relatively sane with.

"Right... But we're getting off topic. Yes, I am quite fine with seeing how far I can take this." Kira stated as he got back to his tuning. At this time, the alert rang out. Seemed like it was time for the next battle.

"All hands, Level One Battlestations!"

11.5

"This combination is just unfair," Mu La Flaga stated as he blazed through a trio of CGUEs with the ZAFT MS exploding shortly afterwards. He was currently piloting what he and Kira had designed as the next gen Striker Pack compatible fighter, the Chronograsper. In this case, the combination is the fighter equipped with a GN Striker. Four total beam cannons, two each of regular and GN types, two missile bays, six GN Fangs and a GN Field meant he was able to fly through the sprawling battle without much fear.

"We could take on both sides of this battle with mass-produced Moebius units at this point. It's like shooting fish in a barrel," Cagalli answered as she shot down a Launcher Dagger in her own Chronograsper, which was equipped with a Missile Striker Pack. Said Striker was based on the Kyrios Gundam's Tail Binder, only with vastly increased space for additional weapons due to miniaturization of the required tech. Sure, she didn't have a GN Field for additional protection since it didn't use GN Particles, but the only way she was going to be hit was by being careless.

"Is that a new challenge I just heard?" Miriallia inquired eagerly. She had taken up piloting like Flay and Natarle had, so she was flying around in a Chronograsper too. This one was using an Ootori Striker instead of a custom one. It was just a random pick, really. All of them were. She blasted a pair of GINNs that had turned to face her.

"An informal challenge or will we have to make a rule set for it?" Kira asked in response from the cockpit of his own Chronograsper as a Strike Dagger exploded off to his left. This one was carrying a Funnel Striker, which was based on the insectoid abdomen-like binders of the Qubeley and Queen Mansa. Not only did it have the Funnel attack drones from those, but along the top of the structure was two lines of Funnels from the Jagd Doga line too. Said attack drones launched again after a recharge, sniping half a dozen MS from both sides shortly afterwards.

"Just keep it informal, I say," Flay gave from a IWSP-equipped Chronograsper. The gatling shield mounted under her craft blazed away with the other machine guns and autocannons, filling a CGUE with holes.

"Alright," Kira started. "Just remember that we aren't turning casualties into points on a score board. That way lies Sakura Syndrome."

"RIGHT!" All Chronograsper pilots acknowledged.

11.6

"And you called my designs excessive," Kira commented as he noticed the number of relatively well equipped Striker Packs floating in the Archangel's hanger bay.

"Hey, most of these are very tame in comparison to your Dreadnought Striker," Mu returned as the mechanics were finishing up. The Striker Packs in question all had one main theme in common.

"So, going back to your main shtick of using remote weapons?" There it was. All of the Striker Packs Mu has designed are all based on and equipped with remote weapons from other Gundam loops.

"Yes. I mean, it really is my thing in baseline. I have the; Moebius Zero, Exus and Akatsuki."

"You were borrowing the Akatsuki, you mean?" Kira smirked, since ninety-eight times out of a hundred in his baseline runs, Cagalli demanded its return after the final space battles were over. It was made for her by her father, but she had to stay in ORB to do her job as Chief Representative during that time.

"Yeah, yeah. By the way, has she made any progress on being able to use the Shiranui pack without needing assistance from the computer?" He was honestly curious. It's not everyday that he finds more people who can use Attack Drones from their loops.

"Yeah. I'd say, if she keeps up the current pace, she can reach your level in approximately... twenty-two loops." Kira predicted.

"Did you just make that up on the fly?" Mu questioned his Anchor.

"Possibly. In any case... Do you have extras of these?" Mu rolled his eyes at the interest Kira was showing in the Attack Drone Striker Packs.

11.3b

"To think they've both improved so much," the Awake Murrue mused to herself as she watched Kira and Mu dance across the stars with their Mobile Suits. Her blonde lover, piloting his Lightning Strike, darted back and forth all the while maintaining incredible speed. His skill had grown to the point that he didn't need to pause to take shots with the electromagnetic cannon his Striker Pack came with.

In contrast, Kira was moving a lot slower; however, nothing came close to harming his Dreadnought Strike. His strategy was well defined, keeping the bigger DRAGOON pods close to his Gundam so they could form a barrier as needed while the smaller Beam Reamers zipped around the battlefield to snipe his targets. On top of that, he launched the remote weapons he had recharging before recalling the mostly depleted ones so he could keep up the pace. That said, he wasn't remaining stationary nor letting his remote weapons do all the work; just that he wasn't maintaining the speed Mu was.

This hadn't been a battle from baseline. The Archangel's increased battle performance compared to then caused bigger ZAFT battle groups to come at them in attempts to end their threat. However, due to said increased battle performance, they defeated such formations easily. When this fight had started, there was five Nazca-class battleships and four Laurasia-class frigates with full MS complements attacking them. In only a few minutes, they were all retreating save for those who had been too damaged.

And that lead to another interesting change from baseline. The first time around, they only survived by the skin of their teeth due to Kira's Strike and more than a little luck. This time, however, they were doing their job so well, they had to collect the disabled ZAFT suits and rescue the pilots because their home ships left. They now had to keep at least two prisoners per cell. It was a very thankful thing that everyone Awake had food to contribute or else their already low initial supplies would have dwindled rapidly.

Hopefully, they could drop off the whole lot of captives over to the eighth fleet when they arrived. They could at least be assured that they'd get humane treatment from Rear Admiral Lewis Halberton. Until then, they'd have to deal with these changes.

Kira Yamato took a cautious step back as he Woke up among his friends while they were all working on their prototype exoframe. However, this wasn't the typical one he was used to working on from his baseline. Sending out a Ping, he got one in return. His friend, Miriallia Haw, stepped back with him.

"Kira!" She whispered fearfully, "Are we in a variant or is this a fused loop?"

"I have no idea, Miri," The Anchor whispered back. "Though perhaps this is my chance to get a sonic screwdriver?"

In place of the clunky, angular, white frame they usually worked on was a slimmer, cylindrical, brown frame. It was studded with large bumps and the top was a dome with glass electric tubes. A single stalk served as its view port and two stubby "arms" were its weapons. Only thing that was worrying the two loopers were, was it still just a shell currently or was it going to get a pilot soon?

11.8 (The17thImmortal)

Gundam SEED/Ar Tonelico

Lacus Awoke staring at a pneumatic door. For a brief moment she just stood there, staring at her own reflection in the metal as she tried to make sense of her situation or else wait for the Loop memories to come in.

She looked almost identical to her baseline self, whenever she Woke Up in that lifepod; even her clothes were the same. But younger – at a guess, Lacus didn't think she looked more than twelve or thirteen years old. Not the strangest thing she had ever Woken Up to, certainly, but surprising nonetheless.

Finally she decided she had waited long enough – if nothing else, her baseline Loop had taught her that the consequences of waiting too long to act, could be just as bad as acting in haste – and hit the

manual release for the door in front of her. Ironically, that was exactly when the Loop memories decided to settle in, and Lacus stumbled just as the door slid open.

She *wasn't* only twelve or thirteen years old – she was, in fact, almost *nineteen* , and something called a… Reyvateil?

The person in the room in front of her, looked at her uncertainly. A blond boy about her age – her real age – dressed in piecemeal white armor over dark clothing, that stirred recognition from her Loop memories. Finally he asked, "I don't suppose you're feeling kind of Loopy, are you?"

Lacus beamed; a fellow Looper, then. "Oh my, yes!" she smiled happily. "Would you happen to know someone who might be able to Anchor me?" The boy smiled back hesitantly, but shook his head.

"Unfortunately, our Anchor's… not really available at the moment," he replied, before climbing quickly to his feet. "We can talk more later; right now we need to get out of here before the guards find out we're both loose." He made his way briskly toward the exit, taking her wrist gently in hand as moved past.

"Oh, yes!" agreed Lacus. Having to avoid being discovered in places she wasn't supposed to be was something she had plenty of experience in. "Please, lead the way."

"Thanks." Together the two of them made their way down the corridor. "I'm Lyner Barsett, by the way, but you probably already know that," he said. "…This might sound like a strange question, but are you a singer in your regular world?"

"Haro! Haro!"

As was becoming common, the sudden noise from Pink-chan jarred Lacus both awake and Awake at once, the shout itself caused by the faint yet noticeable tremors resounding through the lifepod's frame

as the Strike took it in hand. A quick Ping confirmed this; her love was just meters away outside, with two more Pings returning fairly quickly from onboard the *Archangel* .

She smiled, anticipating the moment when she could be in Kira's arms again, and hoped that one of those Pings might be Flay. For all of their differences in the beginning, both in the baseline and again after the start of their Loops, Lacus had truly come to care just as strongly for Flay.

That last Loop had been interesting; almost fun, really, and certainly enlightening. She could see why she had Looped into it. Artificial humans, who used the power of song to draw power from the Tower of Ar tonelico, that they could craft Song *Magic* from it? Lacus could only smile at the very idea – it almost seemed as if she herself had been made for such a world!

Though she still couldn't shake the feeling that the Anchor, Miss Mir, disliked Lyner for some strange reason. She couldn't really understand why – even though she had replaced one of his own loves for that Loop, Lyner had never been anything but a perfect gentleman to her.

Lacus blushed a bit at the memories that came up alongside that thought. Apparently, one of the effects of being a Reyvateil was that her mind and soul were now connected to the Tower itself, the "IP address" of which was called a Cosmosphere, and which could be accessed by others via a form of virtual reality, called Diving. With her consent, Lyner had Dived only the surface-most layer of Lacus' mind, both to introduce her properly to the concept, as well as help her craft a few basic spells they would need in order to go about the Loop.

It had taken Lacus several minutes to stop giggling afterward, when she had learned that her Mind Guardian had been modeled after her beloved Haros.

Beyond that, they'd both agreed not to go any further. Lyner, because he was culturally predisposed to look upon Diving as an act of very personal intimacy and trust, *not* something for one to do with merely casual acquaintances. (Although Lady Shurelia, who was also Awake that Loop, had informed Lacus that Lyner was actually worse about this particular point than most – apparently his own two lady-loves, Misha and Aurica, had had to tell him point-blank to his face that they *wanted* him to Dive them before he would do so!)

Lacus, because she wanted the ones to do so to be her own loves. In that, she agreed with Lyner fully.

The lifepod's vibrations shifted; the Strike was now coming in to dock. Lacus smiled – just a few more moments now, and she would truly be home again.

" *Was yea ra chs hymmnos mea…* " she sang joyfully beneath her breath, that beautiful language she had learned upon that Tower of almost impossible heights…

…and stopped cold as she felt that foreign-yet-familiar feeling of *POWER* welling up within her, a pinprick of light blossoming into being in front of her eyes. It lasted only an instant before fading, but that brief existence was unmistakable nevertheless.

"Haro! What was that, haro!"

Lacus! Are you alright? Lacus heard Kira's voice in her mind, surprised and concerned. *I felt… something…*

But Lacus could pay either exclamation no mind, her focus totally upon the sheer impossibility that had just happened before her.

"Oh… my!"

Chapter 15

"Charging Manadrive!" Kira declared from inside the cockpit of the Strike Rouge. He had been doing a mostly baseline run since he was alone. Sure, he got some questioning looks about the strange Striker Pack that had appeared out of nowhere, but no one's asked him about it. The booster he used to get into space now broke away. It wouldn't be long until the Eternal came into sight, ZAFT's forces attacking the carrier.

The massive, magical power source hummed serenely as it readied itself for the spells to follow. This was his first test of the AMP Striker outside of controlled conditions, so he was a bit nervous as he ran through the final checks, "All gauges stable, no problem with the spell list programming... Let's rock!"

Kira took a deep breath, slowly counting down the seconds until he was in effective range. Five... Four... Three... Two... One...ZERO! A glow emanated from the AMP Striker's many ports as the Gundam got ever closer to the battlefield until Kira pulled the trigger. In an instant, thirty-five light orbs of various colors burst out of the backpack towards the battle group. Three of the spheres touched the Eternal's hull, covering it in a protective aura that deflected most of the assault. The rest impacted into the attackers, exploding like missiles against weapons and limbs.

"Kira?!" The voice of the Desert Tiger, Andrew Waltfeld came through on his comm, "What the hell was that?!"

"A successful test run of a Striker Pack that was found recently," The young man answered, not really lying. After all, he may have placed it there but it was found by one of the mechanics.

"You came to assist with an untested Striker Pack?" That seemed to throw the veteran from the previous war for a loop... No, not that kind

of loop.

"It's been tested in controlled conditions, but not on the battlefield," Kira replied neutrally. The glow returned to the Striker's ports as more spells were readied. This battle was about to end.

"Whew," Kira sighed in relief as the trio took a step back from his work. It had taken more than a few loops into the Esper Branch with Terra and Celes to make it, but he figured that it was worth the effort. Also helped that the pair of fellow Loopers had a few human-sized examples to analyze; a shield that negated, if not absorbed, any elemental magic thrown against it and shrugged off anything else. Even the strongest of the Gestahlian Empire's Magitek was ineffective before it.

They were looking at a several meter tall hexagonal shield with a floral pattern and an array of gemstones on the front; made to very exacting specifications for use with a Striker Pack that incorporated Gestahlian Magitek. Of course, it wasn't just the metalwork; magic was woven into the shield as it was being forged. Terra and Celes had pointed out near the beginning how their knowledge of Magitek was what allowed them to recreate the process, for which he was very thankful.

"Not exactly a mass-production process, was it?" Kira joked with the ladies he had been working with.

"True, it does require knowledge of Esper magic or some derivative," The green haired Half-Esper stated. "However, we can continue to refine the process from here."

"Yeah, because this was pretty much just the proof of concept. I'll need many more for the Striker Packs my friends will use," Kira agreed. "As well as for the Mobile Suits I promised to make for you two."

"Giant machines that could crush Magitek Armor underfoot like one would crush an ant and lay waste to the Empire's forces with firepower they couldn't hope to achieve. Stopping the Empire will be no trouble at all with such things," Celes added as she finished up the final inspection of the newly made shield.

"So," Kira started after a moment's pause. "We need to test the shield now, right? Make sure we did everything properly?"

The two magic-users looked each other and nodded. The visiting Looper pulled one of his Strike Gundams out of his Subspace Pocket and entered the cockpit. Once it was online, he activated the Phase Shift Armor; turning the dull grey machine a bright white, blue and red. The giant mecha reached down and lifted the shield effortlessly, holding it at the ready.

First up was the two Magitek Knights using their own spells against the shield. Massive balls of solid fire, enormous crystals of ice, thick streams of lightning and giant pearls of holy power crashed into the target. However, the pair noticed a kind of shimmering in front of the shield as everything was absorbed into the gemstones, which were now glowing. Soon enough, the glowing dimmed and the Mobile Suit holding the shield brightened for a few moments afterwards.

"Wow!" Kira's voice came over the loudspeaker. "The Strike's batteries just supercharged! I know it's magic, but I didn't expect such a direct result without a dedicated system in place."

The two ladies merely giggled to each other at his reaction. After taking a moment to school their expressions, they continued the testing.

12.3

"Crap, crap, CRAP!" Murrue Tsukino yelled around the toast in her mouth. "I'm going to be late again! Of all the people I could have been this Loop, why did it have to be a lazy teenager?!"

As she was busy finishing what was left of her breakfast, she basically tripped on a random pebble on the sidewalk. After a short slide on her chest, she groaned in pain.

"AND I AM SUCH A KLUTZ! RAGH!" She had managed to keep her toast from falling onto the ground at least, though her school bag had taken a short flight. Gritting her teeth as she stood up, she began her sprint again while picking up her bag along the way. She bumped into a blonde young man in her haste, but only faltered a bit before righting herself and speeding off.

"I'm pretty sure that was Murrue," Mu La Chiba thought out loud. He then sighed as he continued walking. "Dang, she's rather young right now. The wait is going to kill me."

12.4

So, is this like that thing of yours? That connection you said was difficult to explain without experiencing it. Murrue asked in her head as she sat in a small outside cafe. All she wore was a strange light pink leotard corset, matching stockings with boots and shin-guards and a black leather jacket. She was a bit embarrassed by her outfit, but there was something kind of fun about it. Perhaps that was just her Unawake Self filtering through. Under her jacket was a shoulder holster, holding the Seburo M5 that is standard to her unit.

It's close enough for government work. Mu La Flaga responded over the connection as he was driving to meet her. He wore a bomber's jacket over a black tanktop and camo pants. His normal eyes had been replaced by cybernetic ones... Murrue hadn't been very happy about that; she loved his playful blue eyes.

Makes me wish I had it in baseline too. The brown-haired cyborg lady groused. She wouldn't give up her relationship with Mu for anything, but she had noticed the way her Anchor and his lovers interact with each other and she wondered if she's missing out on anything without that connection.

Don't worry about it too much, my Angel. It can be just as much of a curse as it is a blessing. The big and bulky male cyborg grimaced as he continued. *For one thing, that trio of lovebirds don't always remember to shield themselves. It's a good thing it's only limited to the Archangel most times. Otherwise anyone who could intercept it would suffer from sudden nosebleed.*

I'll take your word for it. Murrue sent back as she took a sip of her drink. It wasn't actually coffee, being a full cyborg meant she couldn't eat normal food anymore, but she had adjusted her body to the point that it at least tasted close enough. Her friend Andrew would probably have a few choice words about the taste though.

Major, a potential case has come up. Go investigate these coordinates. Her boss, Aramaki, informed her over the connection through a different channel.

Yes sir... Mu, you hear that?

Loud and clear, Major. Game time. I'm almost there for pickup.

Counting on you.

12.5

Explosions marked the end of a Muscle Tracer attacking Kira. In the cockpit of his Armored Core, he stretched his stiff muscles though it didn't help much. They weren't stiff from being in his AC for so long, but from the Human Plus operation that had been performed on him some time ago. He really didn't want to get into why it was done to him. Suffice it to say, he was very glad that he was alone this Loop.

The Raven sighed as he blasted another MT to scrap with his Pulse Rifle; his black AC moving without pause. The technology of this world was interesting, but the mercenary world of the Ravens and their contractors was completely at odds with his overall pacifistic nature. Not to mention, he found this world to be rather bleak and

markedly unfriendly. So he could only slog through while collecting technology here and there.

Oh yeah, there was that problem... His Subspace Pocket was set to deposit only this Loop. Because of this, until he got much better parts for his AC, he wasn't in any position to try and correct the world at large. Being the best pilot meant nothing if the machine wasn't sufficient for the task.

"Kira... So, you're the one who took the contract?" The voice of a fellow Raven reached his ears. But what he just said... "I'm sorry, but I was hired by the opposing company. No hard feelings, okay?"

With a humorless laugh, the Human Plus pilot replied, "No hard feelings..."

With that, they aimed their guns and began their battle.

12.6

"THIS IS FUN!" Miriallia laughed as she ran what looked like a ginormous paint roller along the ground. She was apparently something called an Inkling, a squid-like being that can turn into a human form. She was on a team of four Inklings, colored white, facing off against another team of four, colored crimson. They carried either water guns filled with ink in their color or the rollers.

Her teammate that also had a giant roller, Mu La Flaga, came up alongside her. The older man merely smirked in response to her declaration. They met up with Natarle Badgiruel, who was currently exchanging fire with one of the crimson team with her "Splattershot"... which looks like a Supersoaker but acts like a submachine gun. A few moments later, her opponent exploded into a puddle of white ink.

"There you guys are," She stated before turning into her squid form for a few moments. Inklings can merge with ink of a matching color and swim through it in said form; even up vertical surfaces or

through tiny pipes. In doing so, she refilled the ink of her weapon. "Been getting ink everywhere?"

"Yes, ma'am!" Miri answered cheerfully. Though it hurt to get splatted by the other team, this was enjoyable for the Loopers. Heck, each team had a respawn point so no real worry about death.

A male Inkling popped out of some remaining crimson ink with a Roller. While this caught the trio by surprise, a long stream of white ink splatted him. Miri waved and Mu winked at the team's sniper, Murrue Ramius with a Splat Charger rifle. She gave a thumb's up before taking another shot at the other team.

With a nod, the two Roller-equipped Inklings took the front as their friends acted as fire support. One minute left on the match clock

12.7

Kira Yamato had acquired many different tastes over his time as Anchor: alcohol, to get rid of certain loop memories, coffee because of interaction with Andrew Waltfeld, various brands of MRE due to all the various military he's served in. However, thanks to his baseline, he really enjoys a good Doner Kebab. Speaking of which, he was watching Andrew and Cagalli once more getting into an argument about putting yogurt sauce or chili sauce respectively on the flat-bread sandwich.

He merely sighed quietly as his Unawake sister and the former enemy commander shouted back and forth. They did that every single time they were in the same room together and Doner Kebabs were the food of the day. Thus, he was at a different table to enjoy his own meal without them using him as the tie breaker. Because of their antics, he's had it with yogurt sauce, chili sauce and both at once. Since the last one is baseline during the first argument, he's gotten used to the taste... They didn't usually listen to him during the argument anyway.

Kira picked up a bottle of chili sauce to cover his own food in. However...

"Hah, see! Kira agrees with me!"

Crap , he thought as they had apparently noticed his choice for that particular meal. Personally, he preferred to alternate between the two sauces.

"So, that's what your choice is, young man?!"

Dang it. Was it too much to ask to just enjoy a meal in peace?

12.8 (KrspaceT)

His Gundam at the ready, posed almost like a sprinter would, Kira (who was not the crazy psychopath with the book) Yamato opened up communications with the visitor's own Gundam.

"So, we race until we get to the marker, and turn around here. No teleportation, wormholes, or golden mushrooms" Kira reminded the other pilot as he got a amused comment back.

"That was a Gundam Kart loop Kira" Wedge Antilles, aspiring greatest pilot in the multiverse (and very well up there at that) snarked "Now, let's get started"

3

2

1

Blast Off!

The Gundams were off!

12.9

"Mwahahahahahahaha!" Everyone in the crowd heard as a maniacal looking man with a rope-bound woman over his shoulder ran down the street while twirling his mustache.

"There goes another one," Miriallia sighed from where she sat at a local cafe with her Looping friends. "That's the fifth one in the last hour."

"Fourth," Natarle corrected before taking a sip of her coffee. "That's a repeat."

"Really? How could you tell?" Miri asked curiously.

"It was the same woman," was her answer.

"MWAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!" This time, it was a maniacal woman was tying up and carrying off some random guy in the crowd... while twirling a mustache.

"Blue Cosmos is weird this loop," Kira slumped his shoulders for a moment. After taking a drink from his cup, he said, "Well, at least it's a good thing there's no trains in the Cosmic Era anymore. Otherwise, this would actually be a problem."

"What the HELL!?" One azure-haired Coordinator shouted in the privacy of his own cockpit. "WHY THE HELL AM I BACK IN THE AEGIS' COCKPIT!?"

Yeah, it's Athrun Zala. Quickly calming down, he reviewed the situation. First and most obvious, he was in the Aegis Gundam again though it had been destroyed years ago. Secondly, he was apparently with ZAFT again. Thirdly, on the Aegis' monitors, he could see the debris of the destroyed Heliopolis colony.

"It couldn't have been a dream; too long and concrete for that," he mused. Dreams and nightmares were nothing new to the veteran soldier so when he remembered one far more clearly than normal

with none of the usual surrealism, it was obviously something else. "Could it actually be time travel? I know there are theories, but I didn't think any of it was going to be possible in my lifetime."

Athrun took off his helmet, turning it around so he could look at his reflection in the glass. He contemplated the events to come and what may happen if he changes them.

"I have a chance I never knew could happen... I can save Nicol, stop my father..." A young man with red eyes appeared in his mind, "get through to Shinn..." A very familiar blonde girl took the young man's place, "support Cagalli better... Damn, I was such a mess."

He put his helmet back on. Then he turned the Aegis toward his home ship, the Vesalius.

"First thing's first. Rau Le Creuset needs to die."

"It's about that time," Athrun muttered to himself as he waited in his room. Arranging things so that he could assassinate Rau Le Creuset without being found it took some doing, but managed it somehow. After all, the elite pilot had plans and without evidence, killing his commanding officer would make a court martial the least of his worries.

His thoughts turned to the most recent engagements against the Archangel. A frown formed as he recalled his fight with Kira and the Strike. It had taken all of his skill and even SEED Mode to keep up with his friend. When had his friend gotten so overwhelming? Not even the Kira that destroyed the Messiah fortress was that good. And where had the sudden jump come from? It was like Kira was the one Athrun remembered one battle and then the next he was someone else.

A call came while he floated in the zero-g environment, causing him to push his thoughts aside. He pushed off the nearby wall and reached the comm.

"Zala here!"

"We just received a transmission from the Strike," Captain Ades stated. "Apparently, he has Lacus Clyne with him and he wants you to meet them personally for a transfer."

"Are those my orders, sir?" Athrun asked neutrally.

"Hmm... What do you think of this turn of events?"

"Permission to speak freely, sir?"

"Granted," the Captain acknowledged.

"Honestly sir, I can only come to two conclusions. Either the Strike's pilot is going against his superiors to do this or he's doing it with their permission. As we've discussed, I know the pilot and him carrying her back with or without the Captain's go ahead is something he'd do."

"And do you think it has something to do with the fact that they'll be meeting up with the EA's 8th Fleet soon?"

Athrun paused, since last time it was due to the destruction of some ships on their way to meet the Archangel. After a moment of thought, he agreed, "That's the only conclusion I can come up with."

"Hmm... Very well. Launch in the Aegis and recover Lacus Clyne," Captain Ades ordered.

"Sir!"

Athrun flew towards the Strike in silence as he tried to think of what he would say and do based on the last time. Things had happened differently earlier, so he had no idea how that changed later events. He especially wondered about the sudden jump in skill that his friend had. Soon enough, however, the Aegis was facing the Strike.

First thing he noticed, Kira didn't aim his beam rifle at him. In fact, it looked like the Strike had the rifle stowed away on its waist rack. Second, the cockpit opened up without the call for him to come out first. Admittedly, Athrun followed suit quickly afterwards. And just like last time, there was Kira and Lacus...He was once again surprised by the bulge in the abdomen of Lacus' normal suit before he remembered that she had to stuff her dress in there.

"Hey Athrun! It's nice to see you!" Lacus called with a wave, the sound reaching him through the commline.

"Captain, I can confirm that it is indeed Lacus Clyne," Athrun reported to his superior.

"Roger. Proceed with extraction."

As Captain Ades finished speaking, the line cut out. Kira's voice came over the comm, "All communications jammed. We can talk freely."

That stunned Athrun. Since when did Kira know the frequencies to shut out the Vesalius?

"H-how did..." The shocked ZAFT Elite started.

"Sorry, but what we're going to talk about isn't for mundane ears." It took a moment for Athrun to realize that it was Lacus who said that. That gobsmacked the remaining sense out of him and left him gaping behind the screen of his helmet. "Athrun, how long have you been experiencing repeats of time?"

Wait, they had come back too?! Hold on..."how long"? This isn't their first time repeating this damn war?! The Elite Forces officer thought as certain things clicked into place. As he pondered this turn of events, he calmed himself and answered. "This is actually my first time."

"Whew. Wow, we managed to find you early then!" Kira spoke in relief.

"Aw, I lost the bet with Flay," Lacus pouted. "Where am I going to find chocolate whipped cream on the Archangel? Erg, stupid caveat that I can't use anything in my Pocket! 'It has to be fresh', she said."

The distance was too great for Athrun to see it, but Kira just rolled his eyes.

"Flay? It's not just us that's experiencing these repeats?" Athrun asked in slight alarm.

That drew their attention back to him and they seemed a bit embarrassed.

"Let's start from the beginning," Kira said. "This all started with a computer that is a tree..."

12.1/12.2: Part of Kira's foray into the realm of combining Gundam sci-fi with Final Fantasy Magitech.

12.3: Turns out, Murrue Ramius and Usagi Tsukino both had the same Japanese voice actress. Yggdrasil loves to pull that switch on people.

12.4: I wonder if Mu was able to convince Murrue to let him keep his Tachikoma.

12.5: The Armored Core series is pretty much anathema to Kira and his ideals... and I've heard the Human Plus process isn't exactly pleasant. It leaves you stiff and not in the fun way.

12.6: Splatoon seems like it would be very fun.

12.7: Kebab War redux! Kira just wants to eat in peace.

12.8: Wedge Antilles, from a Galaxy Far, Far away, wants to prove himself the best pilot in the multiverse... and that means challenging Gundam Pilots to Mobile Suit Foot Races?

12.9: When people call Blue Cosmos a bunch of mustache twirling villains, I don't think they meant literally.

12.10: Athrun Awakens. He has a lot of catching up to do.

Bioshock Fused Loop part 2

Gundam SEED/Bioshock – A Man Chooses, part 8

It was too quiet, Kira felt as he exited the bathysphere. It turned out that he wasn't able to go straight to Ryan's hiding place; he had to detour through some place called Fort Frolic first. As he left the bathysphere station, Atlas spoke up.

"You're almost there. The sphere to Ryan is up on ahead." After a moment, he continued, "Ryan's handed the keys to Fort Frolic over to a guy named Sander Cohen. Cohen's an artist, says some. He's a Section Eight, says I. I've seen all kinds of cutthroats, freaks, and hard cases in my life… but Cohen, he's a real lunatic, a dyed in the wool psychopath…"

Kira frowned at that. First because Atlas had mentioned Section Eight, which was specific to the Atlantic Federation in his baseline loop as the former United States of America – wasn't Atlas supposed to be from Europe? Second was that the radio was getting more static-y than usual with some kind of song playing over the man talking to him. When nothing more came from his radio, Kira shrugged it off as he went about his time doing the usual hacking and resupplying with what was in the immediate vicinity. Then, deciding not to head towards the area of the apparently more-insane-than-anyone-else-in-Rapture Sander Cohen, Kira headed towards the next Bathysphere.

Much to his confusion and shortly thereafter annoyance, his ticket to Ryan slowly sank beneath the water while a giant white rabbit mask rose up at the same pace with stage curtains coming from either side of it. And then there were the odd statues that appeared, a couple on the ground while others were suspended in the air with cord as they bobbed up and down. At least, he hoped they were just statues.

Then, a rather suave voice came over the radio… and he throttled down the almost immediate urge to punch the source of it.

"Ah, that's better… Atlas, Ryan, Atlas, Ryan, duh duh duh, duh duh dudg… Time was, you could get something decent on the radio. The artist has a duty to seduce the ear and delight the spirit." Kira scoffed and really didn't want to listen to the guy. He had already decided that Lacus was infinitely better than this pompous jerk. "So, say goodbye to those two blowhards, and hello to an evening with Sander Cohen!"

The young looper already knew this was going to give him a migraine. Fighting for his life, that was nothing new; he did that all the time! Having to put up with a quite possibly dangerous lunatic who fancied himself some kind of artistic savant was quite another thing entirely. Well, seeing as he couldn't do anything else here, he turned around and headed towards the next immediate door. As he did so, Cohen spoke up again.

"Now, I haven't seen a sign of real life down here in months." What did he consider real life, Kira wondered as he was forced to listen to the guy. "Let's see if you're just another Johnny come lately… or maybe something more delicious…"

That was his only warning before being assaulted by numerous spider splicers. Naturally, they didn't last long under a counter assault from the annoyed looper. As the last one fell to eternal slumber, Cohen started up again… he sounded oddly happy.

"Ohhh, I can smell the malt vinegar in this one. I've waited so long for something tasty to come to this little burg, but all that pass are yokels and rubes… Where are my manners? Come in! Come in! Sander Cohen awaits you… at the Fleet Hall!"

The armored shutters blocking the entrance into Fort Frolic lifted up. Not having much choice for getting passed this part of Rapture, Kira sighed before heading on. He found a Circus of Values machine just inside the entrance, so he emptied it after hacking down the prices. It

wasn't like he was hurting for the currency Rapture used, keeping everything he couldn't carry in his subspace pocket until needed. He suspected it wouldn't be useful at all outside of Rapture, but he had a nice supply if he ever came back in a later loop.

As he passed on into the Fort Frolic proper, he noticed how dark it was with all the lights turned off and he saw more of those disturbingly lifelike statues. Then, the lights started coming on and large neon signs lit up as well.

"WELCOME - to - Fort - Frolic!" Sander exclaimed as this was going on. After a moment, he went on, "No need to thank me for jamming the transmissions of those boors Atlas and Ryan. Let them have their squabble. The artist, yes, the artist knows there is richer earth to till… For example, I test you, little moth, but for a reason. I test all my disciples."

Little moth? This guy's really gone off the deep end. Kira thought as he rubbed his temples due to an oncoming headache. I certainly never agreed to being his disciple.

"Some shine like galaxies… and some… some burn like a moth at the flame! Come now… into my home." Kira was just glad he stopped talking. His suave manner reminded him of Gilbert Durandal, the PLANT Supreme Council Chairman who masterfully manipulated the second Bloody Valentine war to eliminate anyone who would interfere with his Destiny Plan… too bad for him, Kira and his friends weren't so easily removed. Still, it had left a bad taste in his mouth that hadn't yet gone away, though he has found some fun ways of causing the plan to come crumbling down on Durandal's head.

Shaking his head to remove that distraction, Kira pressed onward. He paused to inspect some nearby statues… and be further disturbed by the appearance of them having bled from the neck, if the stains of red on their white plaster outside meant anything… he really hoped it was just some normal macabre decoration from a deranged mind. Knowing this place, it was something very morbid

and he didn't want to think about the possibilities of what they really are.

Other than the initial group of spider splicers, this place was oddly quiet. As Kira went about hacking the security and scavenging supplies, the fact that he hadn't yet encountered any other splicers since entering Fort Frolic set him on edge. It felt like there was another shoe to drop somewhere. Upon hearing some arguing voices entering a particular part of this place, Kira decided that perhaps he had spoken too soon. He walked in on a male and female splicer duking it out among some burning furniture… not the oddest sight he's seen in Rapture.

He let them settle it, while he dealt with a houdini splicer that showed up moments later. Then, once the other splicers had finished their "spat", with one of them dead, Kira dealt with the remaining one as it spotted him and charged. After that bunch, he found it a quiet stretch for a bit longer, as he only found some more of those creepy statue things in some of the areas he looked. Upon entering a bar/cafe kind of room, he found a small group of splicers waiting, attacking him on sight. They were just as easily defeated as the last group; it was so rare for him to find solo splicers now in his progress of the city.

Another thing kind of surprised him was that he hadn't met a Big Daddy escorting a Little Sister yet, even though he had passed by at least half a dozen of those holes the girls used. Normally he'd at least have seen some Big Daddies by now, even if they weren't guarding a Little Sister. As he was thinking about that situation, he came across one of the other ammo vending machines, an El Ammo Bandito, at a dead end. Kira hacked and bought out the machine while wondering if he was missing something regarding both the rather underwhelming number of splicers and current lack of Little Sisters.

After he was done with that supply run, Kira doubled back. A minute or so after doing so, he came across some neon signs on a wall. There was a hand pointing down the nearby stairs while the other signs said, More Items and Downstairs. It just screamed "Trap" to

Kira, but it's not like he hasn't handled such things before. like with that paranoid Peach Wilkins guy. Well, going down the stairs and into the room on the left, rather than continuing straight, Kira found another weapon upgrade station. After using it to decrease the consumption rate for his Chemical Launcher, he heard the sounds of more splicers. Kira rolled his eyes as he reaffirmed to himself that this place had some video game logic in place.

He was attacked by a houdini splicer after leaving the room with the upgrade station, his shotgun making quick work of it. Shortly after that, he ran across a spider splicer crawling at him from the ceiling. With a sigh, Kira pulled out his former revolver loaded with anti-personnel rounds and shot it down. After taking that splicer down, he figured that he had explored enough of this area, so he wandered over to some stairs going up and checked there. At the top of this set of stairs was a door with a large neon sign declaring, Poseidon Plaza.

"Nobody allowed backstage prior to showtime, little moth," Sander's voice said as Kira got close to the door. "Fidgety, fidgety, fidgety, fidgety…"

Kira rubbed his forehead before shrugged it off. This guy really raised his hackles. He also found another vending machine next to the door. So, some more hacking and supply stocking later, Kira was on his way up the next set of stairs to check out that area. It really said something that he was considering this so routine by now. How long had he been down here?

That thought made him pause for a moment. It certainly didn't feel like all that long. He hasn't felt like needing any sleep after everything that's happened… though he partially chalked that up to the thermoses of coffee he found. But then, shouldn't the alcoholic stuff he's been drinking have made him sleepy or something? Kira was very confused by this train of thought. There was something wrong here, but he couldn't place it.

Deciding he needed some time where he wasn't under threat of splicer ambush or whatever, Kira stored that line of thinking away so he could continue his exploration and scrounging. He found a Gatherer's Garden a few moments later, so he bought some more Gene Tonics and Plasmids with the ADAM he had. After injecting himself with them, he paused again as a comparison to the splicers popped into his head. Kira had been injecting himself with every Gene Tonic and Plasmid he's found, yet he himself was just fine after the original rush of pain. He had even looked into whatever reflective surface he could find to see his normal face staring back.

That was very strange. If it was the splicing that caused this to the citizens of Rapture, then why wasn't he so affected by injecting himself with the same chemicals? Kira looked at his hands, where changes occurred when he activated a Plasmid. He activated one called Cyclone Trap, a small whirlwind appearing around his fingers. That disappeared as he switched to his initial Plasmid, Electro Bolt, his hand gaining glowing blue veins with a partial blow aura around the fingertips. Finally, he switched to Incinerate, his hands gained black burn marks with a red glow to them, though he didn't feel any pain from it, and a similar glow on his fingertips with fire erupting where they touched each other.

These things altered his body, but he hadn't become like the splicers. Was it just a possibility or was he now fated to eventually join in Rapture's communal madness? Then another thought occurred to him. Why was he only thinking about this now? He's had plenty of time to think about the implications of injecting himself with the same substance that turned Rapture into the current hellhole it is. So, why had he not questioned what he was doing up until now?

That question haunted him as he just stared at the machine in front of him.

Gundam SEED/Bioshock – A Man Chooses, part 9

When Kira read the sign above the door that said, Cohen's Collection-Fine Art, he wasn't entirely sure of what to expect. The current state of disrepair was definitely not expected either. Only thing of interest he found in the entrance, most likely the place where people paid to get in, was a thermos of coffee on the desk… there was also a pack of cigarettes, but Kira wasn't about to touch those. He didn't understand why people ever bothered smoking, considering all the problems it caused the body. Maybe it was just him.

Shaking his head at that distracting thought, he walked on through after storing the thermos away. The sight that greeted him made him freeze in disgusted shock. There was a table covered in the same plaster that the other statues of Cohen's were covered in… along with three chairs… and their occupants. The closest one had a woman sitting in it with her head bowed, and her arms tied behind the chair. Across from her was a young girl, a bit older than the Little Sisters, but not nearly full grown. She had her head bowed too and her hands in her lap. Finally, at the head of the table was a man in a bunny mask… his arms on the table… with slit wrists… and red stains as if to simulate bleedout.

Just when Kira thought that he was getting used to the madness and blood of Rapture, something comes along to smack him in the face like this. Just from the little girl alone, Kira was fervently hoping that they weren't actually people who had become part of the mad entertainer's artwork. He couldn't even tell if the stains smelled like blood, since his nose had been assaulted by all manner of smells since arriving in Rapture. Whatever the case, this… thing… wasn't anything recent, so he looked upstairs to try and keep his mind off the disturbing possibility. He spotted an audio diary by the stairs, so he picked that up and played it.

He listened to Sander Cohen talk about "doubters" being everywhere, him and Ryan being "simpatico" and that "I suppose the Doubters think you can paint a picture without soiling your smock". He seriously wanted to punch the guy for being so apathetic to what

Rapture was turning into. After getting grazed by the rapid fire of a security turret while heading up the stairs, Kira blasted it with a shock of lightning before blowing it away with his grenade launcher. Upon reaching the top of the stairs, he found a series of three safes. He wasn't sure why they were there, but he shrugged it off as he hacked them to open them. After taking their contents, he quickly dealt with the houdini splicer that appeared and left the creepy remains of the art gallery.

With that out of the way, Kira decided that now was the time to confront the menace of this place. Remembering that Sander Cohen had said he'd be waiting in the Fleet Hall, that was where Kira headed. The entrance looked well cared for, at least… if it wasn't so quiet with a serious lack of Splicers, Kira would probably have liked looking around Fort Frolic more, but after the chaos of the rest of Rapture, the lack of it just had a very sinister feel. He found the typical show advertisements quick glances before dismissing them, heading up a small set of stairs towards the ticket booths.

The way split to either side of the booths, with the Little Sister holes at the end of those splits. There was an entrance next to each hole, leading to the concession stand. Also, there was a security camera, but that was easily hacked. He spotted an elevator to the left of the concession stand and some stairs leading up on the right. Seeing the theater door didn't want to open, Kira looked between the two before pulling a coin out of his pocket to flip. Upon seeing how it landed, he headed up the stairs to the right. At the top, he found a room with multiple shelves for storing film reels and other stuff like that.

He also found an intact and functional guitar. Picking it up and testing the string, he found it well tuned. With a smile, he stuck it into his subspace pocket. He was sure the kids at the orphanage would love it. After that, he spotted a U-invent station and used that to stock up on some more ammo.

Once he was satisfied with that, he looked towards a door blocked by a gate. Getting near it made him jump a bit as a voice he hadn't

heard in awhile spoke up.

"Could you possibly think I would meet with my public now? While I'm preparing? Unbelievable!" Kira couldn't actually see the man, but he did see a shadow moving on the nearest wall. However, what was he preparing for? However, since there was nothing more this way, Kira went back down the stairs to take the elevator.

Upon pushing the button to call his transport, Kira sighed as he heard Splicers coming. Seriously, several came running down the very stairs he just used! Where they heck had they been hiding?! Dealing with them using just a few bursts of Incinerate, he got really annoyed at the apparent video game logic as the elevator finished its descent after the last enemy went down. A shake of his head as he resorted to the by now standard of looting the corpses of the formerly insane for more stuff to survive on. Another automatic response to put under, "don't deal with this until reasonably sure there's no possible danger of ambush".

Kira was now really wondering what this place was doing to him. Would he be able to shrug it off come next loop and how would Lacus and Flay handle hearing the story? He sighed as he returned to the elevator and took it up.

"No! No! No!" Kira frowned as his ride smoothly slid upwards. What was his problem now? It didn't even sound like Cohen was talking to him. Turns out, he wasn't… Kira heard a second voice, begging.

"Mr. Cohen, please…"

"SILENCE!" The elevator finished its trip by now. Kira's ears picked up a piano playing. As he walked out into the hall, Cohen continued. He seemed to be instructing the person playing the music. "Allegro… Allegro!"

There wasn't anything Kira felt like taking in the small hallway he found himself, though there were some ad posters and such… He had no idea what the "Bedtime Surprise" ad was for and he did not

want to know. There was also an ad for "Pharaoh's Fortune" casino with the subtitle, We play for keeps.

What was that supposed to mean? Kira thought as he turned to the only door in this small hallway. He now entered a proper theater with the main spotlights on the piano on stage. There was indeed someone playing it… and from what Kira could see, was chained to the bench. There was also spotlights on the only members of the audience… more of those creepy plaster statues.

"Da, da, da, da da DA, Presto… Presto! NO! No!" Sander Cohen did not have much patience, it seemed.

"I'm trying… Please…!" Kira really pitied the guy, being forced to play for Cohen's twisted sense of entertainment.

"Once again, young Fitzpatrick." With a sob, the pianist started playing again. Kira wondered why he hadn't interfered yet. While Cohen wasn't there to blast the crap out of, he could free the man playing for him. "Da, da, da, da da DA, NO!"

"Oh Cohen, you sick f***! Let me out of this…" Fitzpatrick suddenly declared as his fingers danced along the keyboard. However, as he demanded to be released, the piano exploded in a big fireball. Kira winced at the sight. That probably would have happened if he had tried to break him free of his tether as well. Then Cohen started talking to Kira again.

"Come down now, little moth." Kira still didn't like that nickname. "Life, death… the burden of the artist is to… capture! See young Fitzpatrick here on the stage… Use your camera… take him as he is now… so I may remember him…"

The first thought that came to Kira's mind was, how did he know about my research camera? Second thought was, he wants me to take a picture of the man he just killed?! Kira felt disgusted by the sheer disconnect this man had with the world around him. Yet… he wouldn't be able to continue if he didn't indulge the psychopathic

hack, would he? This place was running on its own internal logic and Kira could only make his way from point A to point B along the trail it provides. It raised his hackles to think that he wasn't strong enough yet to break away from whatever script this place had.

So, his mind raced as he stood there. Why did he feel like he had to go along with Atlas and this man who competed with Rau Le Creuset for lucidity? He wasn't much of a gamer, but perhaps he looked this place up in that Hub he's been told about. Hopefully, he'd be able to talk to another looper who knew the name of whatever game this came from. Anyway, this place seemed to have its own script that it was trying to force Kira along with what had the other loopers called it? Railroading? He didn't know much about railroads, since trains had pretty much disappeared in his home loop.

Either way, it didn't feel like he had much choice in this place. Choice… that word echoed in his head for a moment. There was something off about his mind, he could feel it, but he could only frown as it escaped him. What was he just thinking? He couldn't remember. Seeing the burned body of Fitzpatrick, he remembered Sander Cohen, the crazy hack, wanted him to take a picture of the guy for whatever reason.

Kira slowly approached the body while pulling out his camera. What the heck, it's not like he knew where to find the controls to Fort Frolic so he could skip this twisted mess. He jerked to a stop, where did that thought come from? He didn't want to obey this monster… but that apparently didn't stop him from taking the picture. That railroading effect again?

"And now you've got Fitzpatrick, caught in his moment of glory."

Moment of Glory? This guy's beyond nuts! Kira thought as he had to continue listening the suave monster. Speaking of, he sounded very pleased with Kira as he continued.

"It seems you've got the eye of the shutterbug, little moth! Now, head to the atrium and place his photograph in my masterpiece… and so

our collaboration commences."

I never agreed to work with you. And why can't I see to speak out loud? Did I take the place of a silent protagonist?! Yeah, Kira was not happy. He headed towards the concession stand area through the normal way, hacking the two turrets he came across and raiding the safe they guarded. A couple bottles of vodka and some creme filled cakes were also there…Well, one bottle of vodka now.

With a shake of his head, he started back towards the atrium. He found another Circus of Values along the way, but he was surprised at what it contained. Hacking the prices to minimum, Kira began draining the machine of cream filled cakes, the crunchy chocolate pep bars and bags of those still surprisingly not stale potato chips. There was also film, so he stockpiled that too. With all the money he had, buying the machine out was easy enough. Storing almost all of it away, he indulged himself on the rest. He wasn't hungry, but it felt good to eat.

Before returning to the atrium, he saw some stairs up to higher points in the seating. Might as well, right? Could find more stuff to store away. Not that he really needed more at this point, since he was sure he had enough ammo to take on an army and more than enough of those snacks to last him a lifetime… but more wasn't a bad thing, right? Wow, that sounded like some kind of gamer mentality.

Kira shook those thoughts from his head as he chose to go up the stairs. Anyway, he did indeed find more ammo, snacks, hard drinks and those syringes full of whatever powered his plasmids. They apparently had very good shelf life. He also saw a splicer below him in the theater… where had he come from?! He headed towards another area, losing sight of the guy but hearing some more in a different part he just passed. Then he heard the turrets activate and then couldn't hear them anymore.

This is a very strange and creepy loop . Kira thought, not for the first time. He headed towards the turrets, finding and then looting the

splicer corpses he found. After that, there wasn't much more to explore, though there were some balconies he couldn't reach through the door. Was it mere curiosity that made him want to check it out? Finding the nearest balcony to one he couldn't open the door to, he got on the separator and jump over.

"What an outstanding display of athleticism!" Cohen sudden piped in cheerfully.

So, he's somehow able to watch me without a security camera? Or do not all of the cameras in Rapture summon drones? This place is going to make me paranoid, isn't it? Anyway, he found some more ammo and a new Gene Tonic. With a shrug, he injected it into his veins with the rest of the junk he's found. *Maybe I should inject my right arm for the next ones? I've been doing it all on my left arm up to now. Does it matter at all?*

Another shake of his head. His mind was all over the place, wasn't it? As he leaped back to the other balcony, a spotlight was suddenly upon him and a houdini splicer appeared to throw fireballs at him. Kira responded by shooting him in the head a few times with his pistol. Then, more splicer voices reached his ears. Seems like something riled them up… and it was him taking the Gene Tonic? Stupid video game logic.

Clearing out the ones that appeared before him and letting his turrets deal with the rest, Kira took what he found from them and went back to the concession area. He had heard the camera he had hacked earlier summon some drones with the typical alert. As he walked into that former snack providing place, Cohen spoke up again… and catch his attention this time.

"I know why you've come, little moth. You've your own canvas, one you'll paint with the blood of a man I once loved," Because that wording wasn't creepy or suggestive at all… but did that mean he knew Kira was going after Andrew Ryan? "Yes, I'll send you to Ryan, but first, you must be part of my masterpiece. Go to the atrium. Hurry now… my muse is a fickle bitch with a very short attention span!"

He could feel a headache coming on. Okay, so the man was certifiably insane… and he would assist Kira in reaching Ryan once he did whatever Sander Cohen had shanghaied him into doing? You know what, fine… whatever. Kira wasn't in any mood to argue semantics. He headed back to the atrium with a face that promised pain to any poor insane splicer that dared cross his path. From the top of the stairs, he spotted the place he was sure what Cohen meant by his masterpiece.

"Do you see it?" Speak of the devil. "When I am dust, this is what they'll point to! My Quadtych! My masterpiece. Go ahead, don't be afraid, touch it…"

Who will point to it? This is a city on its dying breath. No one will care about your insane artwork when Rapture's collapsed back to nothing on the ocean floor. And you sound so creepy talking like that, molester Cohen! Kira so wanted to shout that at the crazy man, but he found he couldn't for reasons he didn't know. He just sighed frustratedly to himself and put the picture he had taken in one of the empty slots on the Quadtych.

Once he did, some streamers and celebratory noise makers signaled another statue coming out of the small stage the Quadtych was set up on. It was carrying a crossbow made out of random scrap, though looked functional to Kira's sharp eyes. As he took it, Sander Cohen spoke up again.

"Yes, and there's Fitzpatrick, freed from all his kinks and defects." *Look who's talking you freak hack!* "And here's the glorious news… this is just the moment of conception… out in this place, there are three men, all former disciples of mine, all connected by a common thread… betrayal. Find them, little moth, and immortalize their mortality in my Quadtych. Go. Once they've been sent to their reward, you shall go to yours… and to Ryan."

Kira really didn't want to go along with this insane hack's plot, but he also wanted to go to Ryan and put an end to him. Now armed with a

surprisingly well built crossbow, Kira headed away from the creepy statues holding empty spaces for pictures of the soon to be dead.

"The door to Poseidon Plaza is now open to you, my moth." Kira shuddered at the possessive used. Shaking that feeling away, Kira figured that was his next destination.

Gundam SEED/Bioshock – A Man Chooses, part 10

Well, this was going to be more of a pain in the ass than Kira initially thought. While Cohen had been "gracious" enough to "draw back the curtain", meaning he remotely opened the door, it was into a corridor covered in ice. And after only a few steps into the frozen tunnel, he heard a voice far closer and clearer than he wanted in a teasing tone.

"I can see your breath!" Where was this guy? Kira frowned and was suddenly very willing to pump bullets into the guy's guts. He just hit Cohen levels of creepy with one sentence. Heck, he found an audio log shortly thereafter. That same voice basically stated how Cohen had thrown many people in that freezing area in order to kill them off, how this "disciple" watched and waited and when they started dying. And when they started dying, he scavenged their bodies and made himself a "splicer cocktail"… Wow, he had passed Cohen level creepy in record time. The record ended with him declaring that the "Iceman cometh".

There was even a frozen corpse hanging from the ceiling. Kira sighed before melting the ice with Incinerate and checking the body and nearby trashcan for stuff. He's learned that anything in Rapture can hold something worthwhile for survival. He found some ammo and bottles of distilled water on the body and a couple unopened snacks in the bin. Man, what was this place doing to him?

He headed through the next door to see a room in a complete mess. Several columns had crumbled, taking up a vast part of this section

of the room. There was a door on the other side, not blocked by the rubble, and a hallway to the left of the door he just entered. At the end of said hallway, he saw a splicer disappear into mist… great, another Houdini Splicer. Since that was most likely his target, Kira followed the hallway… a hallway full of frozen splicers put into different poses. Suddenly, the possibility of the plaster statues being just statues disappeared in Kira's mind.

Damn it. Was all Kira thought as he went to the task ahead of him. As he got closer to the area the splicer disappeared from, Kira was suddenly covered in ice. Damn it… again.

"Guess the old grape finally sent someone!" He saw the splicer reappear in front of him through the icy coating. "Son of a bitch left me to freeze… I've got a pose all picked out for you…"

Kira didn't feel even close to death as the insane "artist" did something with his icy plasmid. His vision fogged over with frost while the splicer worked. When he came to, he immediately activated Incinerate and melted the ice covering him. Now freed, he rushed forward passed many icy statues… then one of them unfroze to reveal the splicer he tried to turn him into a decoration. While Incinerate was still active, Kira decided that just lighting him on fire wasn't enough. He turned his burning plasmid on the other statues, thawing out the splicers within… and they were still alive to boot.

Since they didn't like being turned into statues, they immediately went after the man responsible. Of course, they were also on fire from the Incinerate plasmid's work… but Kira just chalked that up to game logic. By the time the melee was finished, every splicer involved was dead. As Kira walked up to do the typical post battle looting of the enemy bodies, Cohen spoke up.

"That was bracing. Take a photo of him, and place it in the Quadtych. I'm feeling full, like an expectant mama." And the creep-o-meter swung fully back to Cohen. He had no right comparing his… disgusting practice… with the miracle of motherhood. The natural power to create life was far beyond that hack's ability to

comprehend. Creating life… Kira suddenly blushed as he thought of having kids with either of his girlfriends. Then he rapidly shook his head to get such thoughts out of his mind.

He searched the body of the insane "disciple", finding an interesting Gene Tonic that increased his resistance to the cold and also allowed the user to cover anything he's holding in frost. Kira injected himself with that right away. It was an odd sensation, his body becoming used to a lower ambient temperature while his hands still held the heat of Incinerate in them. Anyway, that done, Kira snapped the picture with his research camera.

"Yes! Now put the picture in the frame! Let's see what we've got here!" Sander Cohen, creep and apparently Big Brother. This place was not good on Kira's sanity. With the bodies looted, the environs were next, which lead him to find a couple of those gas canisters intact on their stand. They were frozen, but that shouldn't be much of a problem. With picture and spoils of battle in hand, Kira headed back to the atrium.

As he did, he heard an unexpected sound. There were Big Daddies in Fort Frolic! And where there were Big Daddies, there were Little Sisters to save. Kira found the nearest Big Daddy knocking around a group of several splicers that wanted the ADAM of his charge. He let them fight it out, since it meant they weren't focused on him and he could deal with the weakened victor. Though that opinion changed quickly once he saw that it wasn't the standard Bouncer model of Big Daddy. Its armored suit was red and white and instead of a drill on its right arm, it was some kind of harpoon head on a spinning device.

Great, some kind of Ace Custom model of Big Daddy. Why am I not surprised? Kira thought as the Bouncer made mincemeat of the splicers. From what he could tell, the damage to the armored suit was minimal. This was going to be a pain. Well, good thing it didn't see him as a threat as he went around scrounging through the casualties of that battle. It let him have the time to think of a plan of attack on the lumbering behemoth.

First off, he pulled out a fuel barrel from his subspace pocket and loaded it with a number of proximity mines. The combined explosive power could put a serious dent in any Big Daddy. Next, electric buck in his shotgun. Even Big Daddies were stunned from the shock of electricity. Then, anti-armor rounds in his pistol and tommy gun. No need to take any chances on this. Finally, there was the location, right in front of the hacked security camera so it would summon drones to fight it too. Alright, Kira was as ready as he could ever be to tackle his newest combatant.

He started the battle with Telekinesis, launching the heavy explosive into the Elite Bouncer. With the new threat detected, said Big Daddy's glowing view ports turned red. Kira then alternated between stunning the mighty beast with his shotgun's electric buckshot and unloading the armor penetrating rounds in his pistol. The camera locked on to the threat in front of it and the warning alarm went off, summoning a pair of drones to attack the target. When his shotgun was in need of a reload, he stored it away quickly while bringing his machine gun to bear as well. Now the Big Daddy was beset by three different streams of bullets as drones and man blasted him full auto.

Kira breathed a sigh of relief when the behemoth went down. Seeing the Little Sister rush over to mourn her protector, the young man walked up unnoticed and picked her up. Just like all the other Little Sisters before her, she resisted as he triggered the plasmid to free her from her current state. Even in all this chaos and madness, he could still smile at the kid he saved.

"The Little Ones have never had anyone to look to… except for me… and I am not much to speak of." Tenenbaum… It had been awhile since Kira had heard her voice. "You give them hope. And for this, I am grateful. I'll send something to demonstrate that gratitude."

That means Kira could expect another gift waiting at the nearby Gatherer's Garden. The freed girl scampered to the nearest hole for Little Sisters while he searched the Big Daddy for whatever it was carrying. It was rather odd how much money those beasts carried… what did they use it for? Shaking his head, Kira looked to the

Quadtych… that insane project that he had no idea why he was going along with. As he put the latest picture in an empty frame, he'd hear Cohen's voice.

"It's coming together… yes… but there will always be Doubters." Kira didn't like the sound of that. Another statue arose to present him with a gift as Cohen continued accusingly. "You don't doubt me, do you? I could never stomach Doubters."

Damn it. Of all the times he'd let his insanity show. Kira thought as he quickly stashed the ammo and first aid kits in the gift package away. He expected some kind of attack from the mad "artist". When none came, the young man growled. This place really got his hackles up. With a shake of his head, he headed to the Gatherer's Garden to collect his gift from the Little Ones. Some more ADAM, an upgrade to the Hypnotize Big Daddy plasmid he had received from them earlier and some more first aid kits… how thoughtful of them.

Now there was the question about where his next target was. Well, there was that door in that frozen hallway that he ignored the first time through. Time to see what was behind there. He headed there in a jog, the cold inside the hallway not bothering him at all. Reaching the door, he found it frozen shut… nothing Incinerate couldn't fix. Through the frozen hallway that followed, Kira found Poseidon Plaza proper. He was immediately set upon by half a dozen ceiling crawling Spider Splicers.

With a resigned sigh, Kira blew them away with some quick shooting. Some more looting followed when they stopped coming. More money, more ammo, more items for the U-Invent… only thing he seemed to have to worry about for survival is getting attacked when he wasn't looking. He spotted a nearby Circus of Values, which he promptly used his gathered money to empty after hacking. As he did so, he heard a gunfight start between some splicers nearby. He really didn't look forward to interrupting that. A raid of the nearby El Ammo Bandito later, he decided he was ready to continue.

Well, almost. He spotted a bunch of snacks behind the glass of a window display next to the door he was about to enter. Was he actually hungry? Not really, but why eat the stuff he had stored away when there was perfectly good food right in front of him. So, he broke the glass… and triggered a security alarm. As the drones came to attack him, he just grinned. After all, that meant he could hack the drones for his own defense. So, with each drone he hacked during the minute the alarm went on, Kira was now in control of half a dozen drones.

Now guarded, Kira took the snacks from the display and headed through the nearby door. He found the shootout he heard earlier wind down as one party was blown away by the other party… who also had a personal attack drone. Well, they were outnumbered now as Kira disabled the splicer's drone with an electric shock as his went to town on the splicer. So, with that out of the way, he hacked the disabled drone to add to his growing collection and scavenge the corpses of the formerly feuding splicers. Was it just because of survival that he did this or was he being controlled by some bored gamer at their computer playing this game he's in? He dismissed that second option as stupid since he could still think… or did he just assume he was thinking and that he really was under control of someone else outside this Fused Loop?

This place is messing with my head. I need to get out of here as soon as possible… and that means taking down Andrew Ryan. Kira thought to himself. He then heard the heavy footsteps of another Big Daddy. Well, rescuing a Little Sister was always good in his mind. Taking the same preparations as last time, Kira quickly took on the armored protector. It lasted as long as the last one, allowing him to rescue the Little Sister he was guarding. It was a good feeling, to ensure those little ones were allowed their lives back.

There was the remains of a bar in the room he found himself in, which he raided for the bottles of alcohol he found. There was also a safe there, under the bar. It was hacked and he took its contents. Finding nothing else of interest, Kira moved on. In the next room, he

found another Circus of Values. Of course, some hacking later, he was busy emptying the vending machine of content. He briefly wondered if Natarle would be impressed with the weapons and ammo he's collected. Probably not, but he was sure the hard drinks certainly would get her attention.

The place was a lot more of a mess than the area Cohen tended. However, of course, there was a bench with some creepy plaster statues on it. Nice to be reminded that he was currently working for a psychopath… not. As Kira hastily scurried past it, he heard his presumably next target.

"My collection's almost complete. Then we'll see who the REAL artist is down here." He couldn't really place the accent… or tell if the guy was drunk or not. "Tell the old crow his music cooks better than it sounds!"

What does that mean? Kira thought as he entered the door that presumably lead to his target. He paused at the door to see the devastation of Rapture Records and suddenly, the taunt made sense. That "disciple" set fire to the place. Well, in that regard, Kira agreed with the guy. Shaking his head, Kira headed deeper inside. This meant a drop down to the lower level below. After doing so, he heard a ticking noise… He hung his head for a brief second before scrambling for cover.

Of course, a Time Bomb. There's always a time bomb in these kinds of settings! The explosion was sizable, but the cover prevented Kira from feeling it. Then the man who set it up stepped out onto the higher level.

"You Cohen's messenger boy?" Now Kira placed the accent, he was from the American South. "I've got something for that crow!"

He then threw a grenade into the nearby ventilation shaft. Kira didn't know what was in it, but a fire quickly spread through the tunnel at an alarming rate.

"Spend a little time with my kittens, sugar!" With that confusing declaration, he fled the room. As the fire in the air vent continued, the ceiling above him fell away as something burning ran over it. Then that burning thing fell down as well, revealing it to be a splicer… that started attacking him. Kira could only groan in frustration as he dispatched the flaming crazy person. And then another one fell down.

He killed that one too. Kira then mentally complained at how creative this place was getting at trying to kill him. How annoying. Then a third one fell from the ceiling… now it was just getting repetitive. Dropping that one with a couple well placed headshots, Kira waited to see if there was going to be a fourth one.

"It's all a game, errand boy! Cohen, Ryan! Two old birds pulling each others milk sticks!" Kira blinked at the insult. He had never heard them called that before. He was pretty sure milk didn't come from that part of the body. Shaking his head at the oddity, he searched the current area for anything he could use before finding a crawl space leading up. He used that to head back to the upper floor.

"My kittens!" The crazy explosive lover cried. "You murdered my kittens!"

Those splicers, he meant … thinking about it, they were female. Kira didn't want to touch that subject. Especially since the "mourning" man was throwing molotov cocktails at him. Some Telekinesis and Kira was sending them right back. It only took a few to end that menace.

"He was a nasty one… and my favorite." Sander Cohen spoke up… Kira was not surprised in the least. "But I think I like him better this way."

What? As a pile of burning lard? You loony bastard. Kira just sighed that he couldn't seem to talk.

"Take his damn photo, chop chop." Kira rolled his eyes before getting closer to snap the picture. Though, before he could, he was attacked by another splicer. This was getting ridiculous. Putting that one down with a few solid shots, Kira pulled out his camera to take the photo… and then a second splicer came out to attack him. They were both female… more of this dead guy's "kittens"? Where do they keep coming from?!

After blowing that one away, Kira waited to see if any more showed up. When they didn't, he sighed in relief. This was getting out of hand. Finally taking the picture, Cohen spoke up again.

"You flutter all around the Fort, taking life as you go. You're not a moth… you're an angel. I've never painted an angel… maybe I should…" Kira huffed in frustration, as the tone Cohen spoke in was a kind of subdued giddiness, like he found his favorite cookies in the cookie jar. The young man was just trying to ignore him by now. Doing anything else wasn't good for his sanity. With another sigh and shake of his head, Kira headed for the atrium to place this next picture.

Gundam SEED/Bioshock – A Man Chooses, part 11

Kira slogged his way through the icy tunnel he's traveled before. He hadn't felt so emotionally drained since he was helping develop the Natural-use OS for Mobile Suits during his baseline. He looked forward to the Bathysphere ride to Ryan's hideout, the peace and quiet that came with that ride alone. Perhaps he could even turn his radio off for the duration to make sure he had his thoughts cleared. With a shake of his head, Kira focused on the task at hand… getting out of this insane man's playpen.

Once in the atrium, he headed over to the Quadtych. However, as he neared the thing, this sense of dread filled his mind. Perhaps he was starting to understand the game logic he has been facing so far or perhaps this place has truly made him so paranoid. Whatever the

case, he checked his weapons to make sure they were all topped off in ammo before he put the picture in the third slot.

"That's three of four." Sander Cohen, the hack, said from wherever he was. And then Kira facepalmed as the voice continued while getting increasingly hysteric, "What's that look- you don't like it, do you? I don't need to be judged by you… by anyone… screw you! Screw all you f***ing Doubters! Here's what I say to all of you!"

Damn it. What a time for him to snap. Was all Kira could think as he could see the Splicers coming from the large staircase in front of him. Deciding he didn't want to be caught in that flood of psychotic bodies, he ran off to one side of the stairs.

"Fly away, little moth! Fly!" Kira seriously wanted to find the guy and tell him to shut the F*** up. That and beat the crap out of him. Even moving out of the spotlight around the Quadtych, the Splicers eagerly gave chase. He constantly switched between his plasmids like Incinerate and Electro Bolt and his guns to deal with the disturbing number of Splicers that came out of the woodworks with no indication of where they had been hiding. He dealt with at least half a dozen as more kept coming. "Smile! SMILE!"

*SHUT UP YOU F***ING BASTARD!* Kira could only scream in his head. That facet of his time in this loop was the only thing he currently hated above all else. About a minute or so later, all the Splicers lay dead at Kira's feet. While it hadn't been a hassle to beat them, he was taking some deep breaths to calm down. Then Sander spoke up again as he did the standard post battle corpse looting for survival.

"I'm sorry for that outburst. You'll have to forgive an old fool his artistic temperament." Old fool is an understatement here. Sander Cohen is fully out of his mind. "The birth is so close now… the labor pains can blur the judgment, and drive the passions of even the finest spirits."

Kira could only clench his fists until they threatened to puncture and bleed. He dared to still compare his insane mockeries of art to pregnancy and childbirth. If he knew where to find the guy, the desire to introduce the man to his wrench was sorely tempting. This was seriously turning into a problem. He could only force himself to let it go for now or else he lose himself to rage.

As he had these thoughts, Kira heard the trumpet signal for a gift that he had gotten for putting the previous pictures up. Well, if that was part of Cohen's way of apologizing, then fine, whatever. He took the gift. It was useful enough.

So, now that Cohen's psychotic episode had passed, Kira needed to figure out where the final target was. Not finding anyplace he could open on this side, that could only mean he had to go through that frozen tunnel again. He facepalmed at that realization. He only hoped that it was for the last time he had to go to and from that place, Poseidon's Plaza.

After making it through there and to the Plaza proper, he was once again ambushed by a splicer. Just the one, apparently, which he dealt with easily enough. So, that annoyance out of the way, Kira decided he headed in the direction he hadn't gone previously. Made as much sense as anything else in this place.

He found another single splicer along the way. The poor insane former person fell without him breaking stride. So, where was he headed to find the last elusive asshole? To the Sinclair Spirits liquor store. Immediately, he closed his eyes and massaged his forehead. The entry hallway was full of those plaster statues. Kira really hated Fort Frolic.

There was a security camera to hack shortly after those things. He hacked it without a second thought. After that, however, it occurred to him that this was a liquor store. Well, it was time to increase his alcoholic stock. Despite it not being as well stocked as he would have preferred it, he was still finding plenty of the stiff stuff as he looked around. The bottles weren't even opened. Seems rather odd,

but whatever. At least a fifth of the bottles he found were drunk immediately.

Oddly, Kira found a button behind the counter. Upon pressing it, the doorway downstairs opened up. Well, it was a place to look, right? So, the young man headed through that doorway. The first thing Kira noticed was that the downstairs was flooded. Among the other bottles of liquor he found, there was also a chair with a plaster statue sitting in it beneath a flickering light bulb.

There was also a Power to the People weapon upgrade station. He was always on the lookout for those. After using it to upgrade his tommy gun, however, some more creepiness set in. He turned around to find a plaster statue had somehow appeared behind him… then it started moving to attack him. He blew it away easily enough, but it was certainly shocking. Especially because of how quiet it was, even with the water all around him. And then it hit him that there were silent plaster covered Splicers. Well that was going to make him even more paranoid.

While he was there, he also noticed a safe near the weapon upgrade station. He hacked that open and take its contents before heading back upstairs. He noticed the statue that had been in the chair had disappeared… probably what had attacked him. At the top of the stairs, the plaster statue that had been there was gone too… well, no rest for the weary. In fact, since there wasn't anything else to do here, Kira headed towards the front door… and noticed the statues that had been there were gone now too.

Outside the Sinclair Spirits door, he was ambushed by another of those plaster Splicers. It acted like a Spider Splicer, but even as it crawled along the ceiling, there was no noise even from the parts of the building it passed along. It wasn't all that much more durable than normal Splicers, since he killed it just as easily as a normal one. So, not finding his target, he looked elsewhere.

He found another set of stairs going down to a floor that had low flooding. Following that path, he came across the remains of a

clothing store. At least, that's what he assumed from the modeling dummies. Then another plaster Splicer tried to jump him and was blown away in short order. As he proceeded further, he found another one hiding against a wall. Kira rolled his eyes before shooting the Splicer with his crossbow.

He spotted the only thing in this waterlogged place worth taking, a Gene Tonic bottle. Kira had no idea why it was down here in the open, but whatever. However, before he picked it up, he noticed that some statues had appeared out of nowhere. Well, that gag was getting old pretty quickly. He laid waste to the faking Splicers with some well placed head shots. Anyway, Kira picked up the bottle and inject himself. It was a Gene Tonic that increased his body's ability to take in nutrients. How interesting.

After getting out of that waterlogged room, Kira had to look elsewhere for the last "betrayer" Cohen wanted killed. He didn't understand why he was following that bastards directions, but at this point, he didn't try to think about it. He wanted out of this nut farm and the only way was through Ryan. Shaking his head, he continued his search.

There was a tobaccoria he found in his search. Not wanting to discount a place only to find out later it was where he was supposed to go, Kira entered. Not much in the place he was interested in, since he didn't care for tobacco products for health reasons. There was a code locked door there, like he had seen in a few other places. Hacking it open, he found a room full of high quality cigars.

After hacking the security camera in there, Kira decided he was taking the cigars. While he may not care to try any of them, he was sure there would be some loopers who did. It could be useful to have some bartering material in his subspace pocket. Thinking about it, he probably should have thought of bartering material earlier, so he could have picked up the cigarettes he's found too. Oh well, no time to go back for such a minor detail.

While inside the room, he heard an alert trip nearby. But he couldn't hear whoever tried it… must be more of those plaster Splicers. Well, he waited for the security drones to deal with the thing as he busily put away the many boxes of cigars. There must have been at least a hundred boxes in that one room. Anyway, after taking the cigars for barter purposes, he exited the tobaccoria while the alert he heard went silent.

Once outside that store, Kira turned to the one place he hadn't looked yet. He didn't really want to go in, but alas, it was the only choice. Over the door was a neon sign saying, Eve's Garden XXX. He was really hating this loop… or at least Fort Frolic. Well, no real choice if he wanted to kill that last guy and get out of this nasty place.

Upon entering, he experienced something he hadn't in awhile… and wished it had stayed that way. A vision of a Rapture ghost, a woman dancing on a pole in the middle of a stage. Kira really didn't want to be here… in a strip club… with the past of a dead woman before his eyes. She was talking about a person who just entered… Andrew Ryan. Great, the man was apparently a regular at these kind of places.

Off to the left of the stage, looking at it from the front just entering through the door, was a bar and Circus of Values. To the right of the stage was a U-Invent and Gene Bank wall station. Kira went and turned his attention to the U-Invent, using it to make what rare ammo he could with the supplies he had. Once he was out of the supplies needed for crafting, he turned his attention to the vending machine. Of course, a hack later and he was buying out the machine. Before he headed backstage, he spotted some stairs to the next floor up.

Kira headed up those stairs to look for his target. It was mostly a place for looking at the stage from a different angle. He found several bottles of alcoholic drinks in a few places on this second floor, as well as a door. Opening it revealed that it was a second way into the club. Since he still hadn't explored everything, he turned away from the door.

Heading back downstairs, Kira looked to the one place he avoided in this place til now. He took a deep breath before climbing onto the stage to access the hallway behind it.

"I thought you had forgotten about poor Jasmine." As he entered that area, the ghost vision continued. What was the point of these visions? He didn't want to see the sex life of a stripper! "But I'm so glad you didn't."

"I'm sorry Mr. Ryan, I didn't know…" He heard her say as he got closer to the door at the end of this hallway… did he really want to know what she was talking about now? "I didn't know Fontaine had something to do with it… I… wha-What are you doing? No, no don't, please! I loved you, don't, don't please… No! No!"

As soon as the voice ended, the door in front of him opened. What the heck? What happened in there that caused Ryan to murder his mistress? He almost didn't want to know… but a very morbid sense of curiosity compelled him. As he entered the room, that picture of him and his parents appeared again. It focused in on the mother… why? What the hell was going on here?!

Inside, on the bed for… purposes Kira didn't want to think about, was the bloody corpse of a woman. Kira could barely hold in his disgust for this kind of brutal death. He found an audio diary next to the bed, Jasmine talking about having been paid money for her unborn baby with Andrew Ryan and how she was sure Ryan would figure it out. Well, looks like he had, judging by the condition of her dead body.

To try and take his mind off it, Kira drank the alcohol he found in the room while looking around. He also hacked the safe in the room… it's not like she needed it anymore. Kira slapped a hand to his face at that thought. Was this place really making him so callous?! Still, he hacked open the safe and took its contents before leaving the room with a heavy mind and heart.

"How about some f***ing SERVICE around here?!" A Splicer that didn't know the place was long run down? Well, Kira could take him.

The guy sounded very drunk. He left the hallway leading to the stage. "Maybe I'll just, y'know, do something! The things that man had me do… f*** you. Who does he think he is?"

He then spotted Kira coming out of the hallway. The man had a box with him… so a Nitro Splicer, then, like the last guy Cohen sent him after. After seeing Kira, the very drunken Splicer ran towards the door. Kira chased after him, gun blazing. Despite him using anti-personnel rounds, the guy refused to go down as he headed towards the atrium at Fort Frolic. All the while, Kira was dodging the Molotov Cocktails the guy was throwing at him.

As they left the frozen tunnel, Kira managed to take him down. The lit bottle in his hand at the time dropped back into his box of explosives, taking it out with a big bang and doing quite some damage to the guy.

"He was a lout. But he was vigorous." Well, there's that hack's voice. So, this was the last guy. "Get the photo before he completely dries up."

Kira did so, taking out his camera and snapping the shot. He was actually surprised at how intact the corpse was, considering the big explosion that happened in his arms. As he was about to head to the Quadtych and insert the last picture, he heard the sound of the last Little Sister in Fort Frolic. Well, that wouldn't do. He wasn't going to leave her in this place.

Making sure he was prepared with his guns and plasmids, he confronted the Big Daddy who guarded the Little Sister. After the explosive battle, Kira gently picked the little girl to apply the rescuing plasmid to her. She returned to normal, thanked him and ran off. He was some ADAM richer and his body relaxed a bit as relief for saving another innocent life came to him. Shaking his head, knowing the trial ahead of him, he returned to the disgusting task at hand.

With some trepidation, Kira approached the grotesque structure made from plaster covered Splicers, the Quadtych. This was the last

image for it. Considering what happened last time, he was a bit hesitant to put it up because of possible Splicer swarm. Taking a deep, calming breath, he placed the picture in the last available frame.

The lights suddenly went dark and a drumroll started up. Kira immediately started looking around. Because of this, he spotted a huge billowing cloud of smoke at the top of the nearby stairs obscuring the arrival of Sander Cohen himself.

"It… is… ACCOMPLISHED!" He declared with pride as he stepped down the stairs with multicolored firework sparks shooting out on either side of the stairs as he descended. As he reached the halfway point, he paused upon turning to face his abominable structure. "Let me see it!"

He continued down the stairs, waving and bowing to a crowd that existed only in his mind as the fireworks continued. As he did, he started declaring, My God. It began in a normal voice, jumping up in volume a couple times before being reduced to barely whispers the closer he got to his Quadtych.

"It's… It's beautiful." Kira was quick to disagree, but he still couldn't speak. Cohen then turned and addressed the young man he drafted to do his dirty work. "You'll find your path to Ryan is now clear. Tell him Sander says hello."

He dramatically flourished his arms before raising them into a thinking position.

"Oh yes, you may avail yourself on one of my lesser works as a token of our time together." He said some other stuff but a nearby alert went off and Kira couldn't hear him. For that, Kira was grateful. Still, Cohen led the way to one of two glass domes, one with the normal four digit lock and one with chains and a padlock. The insane hack entered the code for the digit lock to open it. There was a Gene Tonic in with the limbless statue under the glass. Kira took it as a familiar male voice came over the radio once more.

"What happened to you? I've been trying to raise you for a dog's age." Atlas's voice was a relief compared to Cohen's. Hopefully, this meant Kira didn't have to worry about insane artists in Rapture again. "Never mind. Would you kindly leg it over to the 'sphere and get down to Hephaestus? It's time to settle up with Ryan."

Again, what was that sensation burning in the back of Kira's mind that came up during some times Atlas asked him to do something. Shrugging it off, Kira raced towards the Rapture Metro. Heading through the metal shutter doors, he made his way to the submersible that was to take him to his next destination. He entered the area, grimacing as he saw those statues still there from when Sander Cohen shanghaied him for his own errands. Upon entering the sphere and throwing its switch, Kira hoped it was a long, slow ride because he needed the peace and quiet after that mess.

Gundam SEED/Bioshock – A Man Chooses, part 12

In the mostly quiet of the bathysphere, Kira let himself relax and did some meditation he had learned over the course of his looping to flush out the unpleasant memories of Sander Cohen's creepy and disgusting "art". It was just for calming himself down, not for anything deeper. Unfortunately, that meant he was at the mercy of any form of mind control he could be under. Kira was beginning to suspect something was up with his mind. Even though his reaction times and awareness of self were as clear as ever, there was a dullness there he couldn't shake off, like a block that prevents his thoughts from heading in certain directions.

Well, if there was nothing he could do, then he just found what sleep he could in this forsaken place. Maybe it would help his mind a bit, see if it's a lack of sleep that was causing the dullness. That was his hope, anyway. If that didn't help, then he didn't want to think about the implications… for all he knew, he would forget about this train of thought as soon as he wakes up. Kira hated being powerless, being unable to make a choice because of things outside his control.

Freedom to choose, that was his desire. He didn't choose to be the Ultimate Coordinator, nor did he make the choice to first enter a Mobile Suit. Granted, he eventually made the choice to pilot, but that was the thing, he got to make that choice.

This made him think back to the second war in his baseline, to Gilbert Durandal's machinations with the Destiny Plan. He did not believe humans could make the right choices themselves, so he wanted to implement a plan to force people into assigned roles they are best at. Supposedly, this should end conflict due to everyone knowing their place in the world so there's no uncertainty about what they can do with their lives. Except, the people who get the crappy jobs aren't going to be happy, because there always had to be someone to handle waste management. Not to mention, Durandal had used the superweapon, Requiem, to try and wipe out anyone who didn't fall in line with his plan, because what was the lives of dissenters when compared to the lives saved by his plan, right?

Well, no point worrying about it now, since the Loops made baseline stuff near effortless to deal with. Seeing that he still had some time, Kira hunkered down on one of the benches in the Bathysphere and closed his eyes. While a full night's sleep would have been preferred, he has learned how to power nap efficiently. Drawing upon his meditation training, he slowed his breathing and fell asleep.

He woke up as the Bathysphere jostled into place in the metro station. However, this place was very different than the ones he used previously. For one, there were constantly moving gears and wheels. There was also a kind of eerie red glow over most of what he could see. Then his radio spoke up.

"Watch yourself. Ryan's stirring. We best keep to our knitting." Atlas stated with caution in his voice. However, after Kira took a few more steps forward, he spoke up again in a more determined one. "It's time to either run the table, or go home empty. Ryan's got the genetic key to Rapture, we get that from him and we get out of this hellhole. We don't, then you and I are ghosts."

He cut out for a moment as Kira did the usual search for stuff to store away for survival purposes. Then Atlas came back with one last thing to say.

"Now would you kindly head to Ryan's office and kill the son of a bitch… it's time to finish this." Kira blinked at how… direct that was. He once more got that prickling in the back of his mind. What was that? It was going to drive him nuts. As Kira continued scavenging, Andrew Ryan decided to make himself known.

"I see Cohen's lost his touch." *He never had any to begin with* , Kira thought as Ryan continued. "If you knew him when… when he used to believe in the work… in the struggle. And now, he rots in that Neverland, waiting for someone to come and tell him he's still got it. I suppose that's why he let you live."

Kira really didn't need the reminder of that batshit insane hack of an artist that actually made Kira prefer Rau Le Creuset over him any day. At least he could fake being a decent human being. Not like that meant much to Kira since the guy was on his "kill when most convenient" list. Seemed like he had a new name to add to that list already… So why hadn't he previously?

When Kira was done scrounging, he looked over to the nearby Circus of Values. Of course, hack and buy out. It's not like he could use the money for anything else outside of this place. He was actually rather surprised by how much money and supplies he was finding. Even if he wasn't conservative with his ammo and Plasmids, he has found more than enough things he can use to resupply that he doesn't have to worry about running out. Wait, hasn't he already thought about this before?

Anyway, once he was done emptying the annoying vending machine, Kira headed through the door to the machine's left. It opened to a glass tunnel, covered in that eerie red light. Was this light because of the huge building he saw through the glass, labeled "Hephaestus" in yellow neon and also covered in that red light? Well, there's no choice but to head through the tunnel and see what lies

there. Of course, not long after entering the tunnel, Kira could hear the ramblings of some splicers.

As he went on the lookout for the insane residents, he found some more of those odd fuel barrels that only exploded upon collision with an enemy or when shot. With a shrug, he put them in his subspace pocket. One Splicer appeared around the bend of this tunnel, not immediately noticing the young man about to take him down. Kira was finding that the crossbow he has received is a very useful weapon when he wanted to be stealthy. One head shot later and the Splicer went down.

After searching the corpse, Kira spotted another Splicer down the hallway. Of course, it fell to a steel tipped crossbow bolt, just like the last one. He searched that one and an already dead corpse nearby. The young man wondered just how big his PTSD was going to be when he got out of this loop. Randomly, he heard the sound of a whale in the watery distance. It's been awhile since he's heard one.

He found some more stuff to add to his growing barter pool, like cigarettes. As he explored, he neared the building he saw through the glass. He also saw more of those moving wheels from when he exited the Bathysphere. Now he understood, this was a geothermal power plant… and Andrew Ryan had made his office there. Was there supposed to be something poetic about that? The man in charge having his office in the place that keeps Rapture running.

With a snort, Kira headed into the red coated building. He saw even more of those moving pumps, disturbingly close to the walk space. There didn't seem to be nearly enough safeties taken to ensure someone wasn't accidentally caught in one. As Kira proceeded down the ramp, Andrew Ryan came over the radio.

"You can taste it, can't you? Andrew Ryan!" He sounded taunting, like 'just try and reach me'. Kira took that as a challenge. He entered deeper into the power plant, finding more fuel barrels and more Splicers as well. He also found a turret, which he hacked, and another vending machine… which he hacked and emptied.

Seriously, it was like there wasn't supposed to be any challenge here.

Finally, after dealing with the few Splicers and finding any loose usable item, Kira headed through the door marked Office of Andrew Ryan. Of course, he didn't expect the insane maker of Rapture to be right there upon opening the door, since that would have made the building far smaller than it appeared on the outside. He entered a rather long room with more pump parts and a sign pointing in the direction the main office was… and another vending machine. Seriously, what the heck? Well, this one was also surrounded by beer bottles and potato chip bags.

Well, another hack and empty later, he got closer to this wide, mostly empty area with an operating table in the middle. And then a creepy factor kicked in as a female Splicer voice was heard.

"Ahh, a present.." She then laughed for a moment before continuing, "You like, yes?"

Kira was a bit on edge as he got close enough to see what was on the table. He then blinked in surprise because there was a grenade launcher on the table. Inspecting it, he saw no booby trap, so he picked it up and stored it away. Then a frag grenade dropped down, unlit… more ammo never hurt. And then an RPG fell down… rule of threes? With a shrug, Kira picked that up too… and then three Spider Splicers attacked him. He mentally face-palmed as he dealt with them.

Searching their bodies for usables turned up some stuff, so that helps. With a shake of his head that he fell for that trap, he explored some more. Ignoring the U-invent he found due to not having enough material from gathering since the last time he blew the stuff he had making things, he headed deeper into the building. As he entered the next room, Ryan spoke up again.

"A worm looks up and sees the face of God! But look around… it's a regular convention of worms in here. They all had mothers, fathers,

people who loved them. They got married, f***ed their wives. What makes you think you're any different?"

As the madman spoke, Kira saw what this room held. Corpses, impaled to the walls with metal spikes. On display as a warning for all to see. For all the death he's seen so far, Kira froze in utter disgust for this horrendous crime against humanity.

"I haven't chosen a spot for you on the wall yet… let me know if you have a preference." Was that a threat in his tone of voice? Most likely, but Kira didn't care. And he thought Sander Cohen was bad. Seems like he and Ryan are two peas in a nut-farm. No wonder they used to be such good pals way back when.

Forcing himself to walk passed the hanging bloody "trophies", Kira approached the switch that sent power to the door blocking the way. Trying to throw it did nothing, going about halfway down before forcing itself back upright. So, now what?

Persona 4 Fused Loop

Persona 4/Gundam SEED

"Great, where am I?" Was the very first thing out of Kira Yamato's mouth as he looked around while waiting for his Loop Memories to kick in. It was rather hard to see, due to the omnipresent fog. He sent out a Ping, receiving several responses. The memories kicked in shortly thereafter.

He was Kira Hibiki, son of a prominent geneticist and quite the genius himself. At the age of 15, he was already in college and had a patented product out on the market. His Birdy robotic AI pets were becoming very popular. Kira grimaced at that memory as his Birdy represented his bond with his friend Athrun, so he wasn't so keen on sharing it. Oh well, might as well just get over it now.

After a moment, he continued his memory check; He had been interviewed plenty in the recent days as the Birdy's popularity grew. However, a few hours ago, he had received a mysterious phone call. It was somewhat frantic, saying that he was in danger and that he should meet them at a specific address and at a specific time. His unawake self would normally have ignored something like that, but something about the call tugged at him.

So, he went to meet this person at the time and place he gave. When there wasn't a person there, he waited a few minutes. As he waited, he paced around. There was a rather large TV in this place, and when he was in front of said TV he had felt something tackle him and he fell into the screen... And now he was here in this foggy place somehow. Strangely, there was something familiar, and very disquieting, about this place.

Kira bumped into something in the gloomy haze and then he realized where he was now.

"It can't be! Why here, of all places?!"

Yu Narukami looked at the Awake members of his team. They had all seen Kira's face on the Midnight Channel and felt the Ping mere minutes ago. They've had more than enough experience with visiting Loopers ending up in that place to recognize when a Ping came from there. The fog was going to lift soon, so there wasn't much time. So, they were mounting a rescue mission and hope that they weren't too late.

Yu Narukami, Yosuke Hanamura, Chie Satonaka, Yukiko Amagi, Kanji Tatsumi, Rise Kujikawa and Naoto Shirogane all stood outside the TV they use to enter the Midnight Channel. They all shared the thought of making it to the visiting Looper and hopefully getting him to accept his Shadow before he could deny it and make it attack. Getting that to happen didn't always work out.

By this point, they didn't really need to say another word. As one, they nodded agreement before pushing into the TV. The seven humans landed on top of a black and white bull's eye with the outlines of people on it. Though the place was blanketed with heavy fog, they had special glasses that could see through it no problem. To their eyes, they saw an impressively sized TV studio with stage lights everywhere. And then...

"There you guys are! I was starting to get worried," declared a dumpy, blue bear in a red suit as he ran closer. "I sensed the arrival of the Looper awhile ago. It's rather far, so I figured I'd wait here to meet up with you, rather than try and go at it alone."

"It's fine," Yu stated. "Let's go."

"Is this... A hospital?" Chie spoke the question that was on everyone's mind. They found themselves in what looked like a ruined hospital lobby; benches either destroyed or torn from their spots, the long counter dirty with age and covered in ripped posters, and

various papers littered the ground. However, it was the voices that started echoing through the empty halls that really made it disturbing.

"I want my child to have blue eyes and blonde hair!" One woman's voice declared.

"I want my child to possess all of my abilities!" A soft-spoken man's voice stated.

"Exceptional abilities are a gift to help improve the child's future," spoke an older male's voice as if in reply to the previous one.

"She had a miscarriage! How could you let that happen?!" An angry man's voice echoed. "We spent a fortune on the genetic enhancements!"

"Be especially careful of your nutrition and dietary intake during your pregnancy," advised a male doctor to what would obviously be a female patient. "Here's a schedule of how you should spend your days... I can't make any guarantees. Naturally, the mother's body will affect the course of embryonic development."

"Oh no! Its eyes are the wrong color!" Came the voice of one new mother. There were several more voices that spoke along those kind of lines. The Investigation Team all looked at each other during this time as understanding filled their eyes. This place dealt with genetic engineering?! Who was the visiting Looper that his space turned out like this?

"This place is seriously creeping me out," Yosuke stated as they worked deeper into the space, not that he could be blamed. Most people tended to have problems with hospitals at the best of times; make the place a rundown mess, add disembodied voices talking about how they wanted their children modified and how much they were paying to get these enhancements and the creep-o-meter jumped to the red zone near instantly.

"No kidding," Rise was looking especially nervous. During all the time she had her Persona's Supreme Insight, she had developed her own little sense of things. That sense was telling her that something very powerful was here. Yu had told everyone about the loop he had where Naruto and Sakura had gained their Personas. This probably wasn't even close, but still very dangerous.

"The atmosphere's horrible, but it's eight loopers with maximized Personas vs one potential Shadow Self. How bad could it be?" Kanji boasted. They were just outside of the portal to the Looper's location, but everyone else immediately stopped so they could turn fully to face their friend who just invoked Murphy's Law. He chuckled nervously at the unspoken admonishment.

The Investigation team all got their game faces on as they turned back to swirling black and red opening. As one, they marched forward.

Unfortunately, they were a bit late. The confrontation between Human and Shadow was in progress. They both had brown hair and wore the same black jacket. However, while they were different in eye color, the original having violet while the Shadow was gold, they were completely opposite in attitude. Normal Kira seemed like he was readying himself for a fight, combat stance all ready with grit teeth, while his double merely stood with an arrogant smirk on his face.

"No, I'm just one person same as everyone else!" Regular Kira half-shouted.

"But you're not like everyone else. You are better, perfect even. You are the Ultimate Coordinator!" Shadow Kira countered without losing his grin.

"I'm not defined by my abilities alone! Everyone I care about knows that! I KNOW THAT!" The Investigation Team realized what was about to come out of his mouth, but weren't able to interrupt fast enough. "YOU ARE NOT ME!"

Those words echoed through the room. If anything, the arrogant smirk on Shadow Kira's face became absolutely psychotic!

"THAT'S RIGHT! I'm not you! I AM ME NOW!" Many Shadows shot out of nowhere to engulf the rejected Shadow Self.

"Damn it," Naoto muttered, face-palming.

As the Shadow Self grew bigger, Kira put a hand on his chest and collapsed into a kneeling position as he suddenly found it difficult to stay conscious. The Investigation Team summoned the cards that held their Personas and shattered them.

"Izanagi!" Yu shouted as his chosen Persona appeared above him; a mostly black humanoid figure with a strange naginata in one hand, bladed wedges on the bottom of his feet and what look like long broken belts connected to his armored head.

"Takehaya Susano-o!" Yosuke roared as his Persona faded into view over his head; a crazy colored disco-suited man with several bladed rings surrounding him... and a literally flaming afro.

"Haraedo-no-Okami!" Chie commanded with her Persona emerging in the air; a black-clad female figure wearing golden armor on her head, arms and skirt with a green cape.

"Sumeo-Okami!" Yukiko beckoned, her Persona swooping down from the ceiling; a solid gold female humanoid with a ruby-studded shield in each hand and a long string of gold feathers connecting her arms.

"Takeji Zaiten!" Kanji bellowed as his Persona appeared before him; a massive white humanoid robot with flame decals, white cape and a flame shaped sword in its left hand.

"Kamui-Moshiri!" Teddy barked with his Persona materializing next to him; a conical robotic being with a grinning face over rainbow stripes

on the pointed end of its chest, stubby limbs and its arms ended with golden bear paws with sharp blades, a long red cape with white stars floating free over an equally long rocket engine sticking out of the rotund machine's backside and a crown.

"Kouzeon!" Rise entoned, her Persona sliding a large visor over her eyes; a huge six armed woman in a white dress, a telescope in place of a head and a mini-solar system around her waist.

"Yamato Sumeragi!" Naoto yelled, the last Persona to appear; a noble dressed figure with long blonde hair flowing from a biker helmet shaped like a long, pointed beak, with metal wings connecting from its back to its hands and in its right hand was an odd cross between a katana and a rapier with a basket hilt opposite the blade.

The result of the Shadow Self absorbing the lesser Shadows was a humanoid at least four meters tall by himself. He wore dark grey robotic armor over his arms, legs and chest and he had some kind of massive ring on his back with three large conical pods and several more blade-like protrusions. Blonde hair, a small white mask over his eyes and a smirk both arrogant and insane completed the image.

"I AM A SHADOW, THE TRUE SELF!" It cackled psychotically. "AS THE ULTIMATE COORDINATOR, HUMANITY SHALL BOW DOWN BEFORE ME!"

Rise frowned as her Persona scanned the Shadow Self. According to the data, he was very resistant to pretty much everything with physical blows being outright negated. Thankfully, he did have a weakness to Fire. That said, he was also remarkably fast. His main attacks were Fire as well with a few physical attacks to boot.

"Okay guys, he immune to physical attacks, but can be stunned by Fire and his main form of attacks are Fire too. Just keep on him and fight long-term." The fighters nodded at the advice. With that acknowledgement, the eight teenagers sprang into action alongside

their Personas. Blasts of Fire, Wind, Lightning and Ice shot towards the armored form in front of them. The Shadow Kira merely smirked at the oncoming rush of magic, dodging the ice and fire with seeming ease while tanking the faster wind and lightning spells.

"Oh, is that all? Is it my turn yet?" He chuckled haughtily. The protrusions on his back ring came off to reveal themselves as remote drone weapons. They zipped wildly around the Investigation Team for several moments, almost tauntingly. Then the Shadow spoke in a sinister tone, "How long can you survive?"

The drones stopped in midair, barrels aimed at the group. Out of combat reflex, the group scrambled out of the way as green rays of plasma struck the ground they had just been and made glowing hot craters. The Investigation Team immediately realized that this fight wasn't going to be simple. So, the members with defense spells rushed to cast them while others started trying to throw debuffs onto the crazy Shadow Self. He didn't seem bothered when the beams were weaker than his last shot and that they splashed harmlessly against the barriers now surrounding his foes.

"Trying to level out the playing field? That won't work for long, you know!" He taunted while taking some hits of ice and lightning. Then he took a fire spell to the back and fell to the ground. "Shit!"

"Get him while he's down!" Yu shouted as he and Izanagi charged. The rest of the Team followed suit with a battlecry, somehow kicking up a cloud of dust in the process and the sound of a savage beating could be heard as Team members and their Personas kept getting thrown out of the shroud. Eventually, the cloud of dust faded and the Team backed off to catch their breath.

The Shadow Kira recovered after that, returning to the air with a nasty scowl on his face. He grabbed a pair of small devices from his hips and activated them to reveal their nature as blades of plasma. In response, the Team refreshed their defense buffs. With a feral snarl, the mechanically armored Shadow charged.

Izanagi caught the glowing green blades with his own, blocking them due to his nature as a Persona. After the initial clash, the two swordsmen began a rapid exchange of strokes, slashes and thrusts to probe the defenses of the other. This didn't last long as the Shadow Self broke away to dodge the spells thrown at him from the other Personae.

It was apparently part of their plan as the Shadow Self dodged right into the path of Takeji Zaiten's red blade, which was crackling with surges of lightning. The physical impact didn't do much by itself but the strong electric shocks caused him to wince while swing knocked him into the next part of the plan. Yamato Sumeragi conjured up a trio of brightly colored orbs and brought them together, once Shadow Kira was close enough, into an explosion of Almighty power; knocking the armored foe towards Yosuke and his Persona, Takehaya Susano-o. Wind-coated daggers and fists collided with the now pinballing Shadow Self, dealing little overall damage but keeping him moving on their terms rather than his.

Chie and her Persona, Haraedo-no-Okami, were next on his pinballing path, batting him with icy boot and blade towards Yukiko and Sumeo-Okami where they waited with burning fan and wing. Seeing the flames, the Shadow Self tried to boost off in another direction, but was intercepted and knocked towards the pair by Kanji, Teddie and Kamui-Moshiri. With a united strike of blazing power, Shadow Kira was swatted to the ground.

"He's stunned! Get him!" Yu Narukami shouted as he and Izanagi charged, swords in hand. Once more the inexplicable cloud of dust kicked up as the entire Investigation Team pounced on the armored foe. Eventually, however...

"ENOUGH!" With a sudden and surprising surge of strength, the Shadow Self threw everyone off. Despite the blows they had been landing, he didn't look too worse for wear. "You're all just a bunch of pathetic Naturals! You have nothing on me! I am the Ultimate Coordinator!"

Every member of the Investigation Team felt an unsettling burst of energy from inside their foe. Rise frowned from where she had been watching with Kouzeon, registering the sudden jump in the Shadow's power.

"Everyone, be careful! Something very odd is happening with the Shadow Self!"

The Team braced themselves, watching their armored opponent to see what he did next. Then he blurred out of sight and Naoto and her Persona were blasted back by sudden beams of green energy. From where Kira sat on his knees in exhaustion and pain from his out of control Shadow, he watched the battle with desperate eyes.

Things quickly went south for the Investigation Team as they were placed entirely on the back foot. Defensive and healing spells abound to try and keep up with his attacks as the few times they could occasionally fight back was dodged despite Rise's Supreme Insight. In fact, due to Variants where some members joined up earlier than normal, it felt like they were facing an enhanced, machine version of Shadow Rise. Unfortunately, that meant they needed something to tip the scales back in their favor to win here.

Izanagi glowed with intense light as Yu called forth his next Persona, shattering a card in his hand once again.

"Izanagi-no-Okami!" The light dispersed to reveal a now white and gold Izanagi with his spear turned into a giant ring with two parallel blades, the belts that had been hanging from the back of his head were now replaced by long blades, the smaller blades on his feet had extended out into longer, golden blades and his helmet had become sharper and less human.

" *Thou art I, and I am thou...*

From the sea of thy soul, I come...

From the very moment of my emergence, I have been a guiding light shed to illuminate thy path...

I am the original god...

Izanagi-no-Okami. "

"A god?" The Shadow Self mocked. "You think you can beat me with a mere god? You can't match me! I AM BEYOND YOU! I AM ULTIMATE!"

Yu and the empowered Izanagi merely faced him silently, the others recovering in case they had to step in to assist. The Shadow Kira's remote pods launched from their docks on the giant ring on his back and zeroed in on Yu and his Persona.

"Die where you stand, Natural!" A few dozen green beams of energy shot towards the pair. Izanagi no Okami floated in front of Yu and spun his blade, the attack splashing harmlessly on the Persona's weapon. "WHAT?!"

The white god Persona rocketed towards the out of control Shadow Self, jabbing with his weapon. The green beam blades in Shadow Kira's hands flashed forward to deflect the oncoming stab while counterattacking with his own thrust. Izanagi turned the deflection into a spin to block the attack. With his free hand, the Persona blasted the Shadow Self with an intense burst of lightning.

Reeling back from the blow, the Shadow Self redirected his pods around the mighty Persona. The white Izanagi spun his weapon once, releasing energy that engulfed the surrounding pods in fire. They couldn't take the damage, exploding and depriving his foe of his all-directional attacks. Losing himself in rage, said Shadow Self snarled as he brought his blades to bear and charged. More blasts of fire were dodged with ease by the oncoming attacker, causing the mighty Persona to meet his foe in melee combat.

Blades clashed as Shadow Kira tried to use his speed to circle around Izanagi, looking for an opening in his opponent's defenses. However, while he was proving faster than the white Persona, his techniques were becoming less skilled and more wild as his rage continued to grow. Finally finding an opening in the Shadow Self's defenses, one deflected blow allowed Izanagi to blast his foe in the face with powerful flames.

"N-NO!" The raging Shadow Self cried as his body stopped following his commands. Izanagi-no-Okami backed away from his foe and held the ring of his weapon with the Shadow Self in the center. He spun the weapon, drawing in powerful energy. Once fully gathered, Izanagi unleashed it upon the downed Shadow Self in three explosive bursts. Shadow Kira was sent reeling from each one until he collapsed onto the ground.

The brown-haired, violet-eyed young man felt the pain go away and his energy return when his Shadow Self was defeated. Kira pushed himself back to a standing position, though it took a bit of effort to do so.

"Hey, you okay?" Yosuke asked the visiting Looper, walking over to provide a body in case he needed support.

"That... was a sensation I hope to never experience again," was Kira's response as he took deep breaths to recover.

"Yeah, when your Shadow Self runs wild," Kanji agreed while the rest of the Investigation Team walked over to join Yosuke with the visitor. "That feeling like what makes you you is being pulled out and suddenly you got no energy to do anything. Pretty much all of us have experienced that."

"This is your normal, huh?" Kira mused. "Well, at least I'm Awake."

"Everyone's Loopy here, so you're among friends!" Teddie, the dumpy blue bear stated.

"Oh!" Yukiko realized suddenly. "We haven't properly introduced ourselves. My name is Yukiko Amagi. Pleasure making your acquaintance."

She gave a bow with her introduction and each member at least nodded with theirs in turn.

"I'm Chie Satonaka."

"Naoto Shirogane."

"Rise Kujikawa."

"Name's Kanji Tatsumi."

"I'm Teddie."

"I'm Yosuke Hanamura."

"And I'm Yu Narukami."

Kira had nodded back in turn with each name.

"My baseline name is Kira Yamato, but I'm fine with Kira Hibiki too."

Before anyone could ask about that or why he was here in the Midnight Channel, his Shadow Self roused and stood up. Unlike when he was confronting it, the golden-eyed double looked slightly apprehensive as it stared at the original. Kira noticed his other get up and frowned, which caused the others to notice as well.

"Kira," Yu started to get his attention. When the violet-eyed young man looked at him, he continued. "That is your Shadow, the deepest parts of yourself that you don't want to acknowledge. Everyone has a Shadow. As you saw, if they're rejected, they get violent and try to replace the original. So, what are you going to do?"

The visiting young man tensed up at the explanation, but forced himself to relax with a sigh. Striding passed everyone to confront his

Shadow, Kira's expression became serious.

"This place was where I learned a terrible truth about myself," He started as he walked. "A truth I learned from a madman that wanted to kill off all of humanity. In my baseline, there are genetically enhanced humans called Coordinators. However, there was some flaws in the process which sometimes meant that the resulting child wasn't what the parents wanted. To that end, my father and his team were tasked with finding a solution to those flaws."

The Investigation Team listened silently as he got closer with each word and step to his Shadow.

"Eventually, my father determined that there were too many variables to deal with by having the mother give natural birth. So, he and his team set out to make an artificial womb to cut out those variables. There were many failures, many losses of unborn life, in trying to complete this project."

He stopped outside of arms reach from his other self.

"The team didn't have the funding to make the final step they needed to finish the device and were being threatened with cancellation as a result. So to get the necessary funding, my father made a reluctant deal with one of the backers to make a clone for the man. Cloning was illegal at the time, but it was either take the deal or allow everything the project did up to then go to waste."

Kira clenched his right hand into a fist for a moment.

"With that boost to their funding, they got what they needed to work out the flaws of their device. And to complete their proof of concept, my father used me as the final test subject. However, my enhancements were to be the limit of what they could do with the new technology they had; an Ultimate Coordinator."

Behind him, the Investigation Team reacted in horror and shock, taking half steps back and/or covering their mouths with their hands.

Then Kira relaxed his hand.

"But, I don't hate my father. Yes, he did questionable things, but if he was truly so bad, then why do those pictures of my mother holding me and my twin sister so soon after birth exist? And she was smiling... I'm actually kind of saddened that I didn't get to know my birth parents at all."

He sighed again, slumping his shoulders a bit in misery.

"But after learning of what I truly was, I locked it away in my mind. I tried to act like it hadn't happened, not even telling my sister. Even as more enemies appeared who knew what I was, I remained quiet about the issue to those close to me."

Then he straightened up once more and took those last steps to his Shadow.

"So, first thing I do when I have the chance is to tell everyone back home. It won't make a difference to them, but it's something I have to admit to."

He placed a hand on the Shadow's shoulder.

"I'm sorry for reacting so badly to you and thanks for giving me this kick in the ass I needed. You are me."

The Shadow smiled slightly and nodded his head. It glowed and faded to a different appearance; briefly revealing a svelte man with polished bronze skin in an elaborate white and red silk kimono and birdlike wings the color of silver. Then he vanished and was replaced by a glowing blue card.

Kira Yamato has faced his other self. He obtained the facade used to overcome life's hardships; the Persona Jizo.

The brown-haired young man inhaled and exhaled deeply.

"Feeling better?"

He looked over at the Investigation Team; specifically the speaker, Yu. He smiled in response.

Walking over to the group, Kira asked, "So, what's there to do in this Loop?"

They all started walking away while discussing plans for their time together.

Shake Down Cruise

"Hello everyone!" Lacus Clyne called out to the cheering crowd. Her Exaltation-class vessel had finished enough for touring mere weeks ago and this was the first day at the first location of her new concert tour. Unfortunately, the Song Server and Grathmelding Lab wouldn't be complete for many Loops. Still, for the other purposes, the Exaltation was fully functional. "Welcome to my Exaltation Shakedown Cruise Tour! For your listening pleasure, I will be singing in a language I and some friends made specifically for my tour! Enjoy!"

The concert hall of the cruise liner was packed; tickets having been sold out within the first three days for the Earth Sphere Tour. Of course, there was far more than just the concert hall on the ship. Anything someone could want for relaxation was there: pools, rock walls, arcades, bars, movie theaters, spas... and more. Lacus thought it went overboard with the dimensions, but just shrugged it off. She's seen Star Destroyers, after all.

"Wee ki ra chs Chronicle Key en grandee sos dius yor," Lacus began her opening song. Currently, she didn't have any translations of the lyrics for her audience. It was her first tour using Hymmnos just for singing it, though she did feel the twinge of power as her words invoked the spell without a Tower to connect to. Besides, the meaning of the song would only confuse them. "Wee ki ra araus tes soare an giue mea iem."

Regardless of the fact that they didn't understand what she was singing, the crowd enjoyed it with rapt attention.

Several hours had passed since Exec_Chronicle Key. The shakedown cruise was on its way to the next city on the tour, plowing through the calm surface of the Earth's ocean. Dusk's light staining the waters the color of fire as they traveled. Lacus stepped onto the

stage again after a break for dinner and Flay came with her, looking rather nervous at the massive crowd.

The pinkette gave her a reassuring smile and sent over their shared connection, *You'll do great, Flay. While I was surprised you wanted to learn to sing duets with me, I'm very happy we could do this.*

Flay smiled back, *I am too. Although, you're as much of a slave driver for singing mastery as Kira is for piloting.*

She got an impression of a mental shrug in response, *We can't really train you by half, since you need it harder than we do to catch up.*

I know, but I'm allowed to complain occasionally.

They took their positions on stage. Her audience looked a bit confused at the additional person on stage with Lacus, but she was quick to tell them.

"Everyone, this is Flay Allster. She is a very close friend of mine and will be singing with me on this cruise on occasion. Please treat her kindly." Flay rolled her eyes at that last comment. Getting serious, the pair cleared their throats as the band in the background started up the next song on cue. It was a rather somber tone, despite the synthetics making up most of it.

"I will rise in resistance, Sing the oath of rebellion," Lacus began, walking along the stage. "End cease-fire on this high wire, Head to toe in Vanity."

Flay continued with the next verse, going in the opposite direction, "When those eyes in the mirror stare back at me. I'm reminded that the Ghost of Pride is clear to see."

Lacus turned, seemingly addressing Flay with her part. "Wipe away the weakness. Will you let those scars define you? Or will they adorn you as we carve our way to victory?"

"Doubt is crying out but I refuse to let it drown me." Flay half-turned to look at her partner. "Wearing down my fight til nothing's le~eft!"

They then turned to the audience and sang in tandem, "I say Crier! I say Liar! I say Rise in Hell! I stand gazing down at Death as they say, Wa~ar! I'll wage Wa~ar! I hate Wa~ar!

They say, Fight for Peace, but what is that?"

Another vessel, hundreds of meters away, watched the passing of its target. To anyone who could see both, they looked like mirror images; only, one was mostly white and blue in color while the other was jet black. Inside the bridge was a number of Earth Alliance uniformed officers.

"Target confirmed. Sir, we are ready to engage at any time."

"Perfect. Let us show those space monsters that they can't come down and do as they like with the Earth. We shall destroy them with weapons of their own design! All hands, level one battle stations!"

The concert suddenly paused as the ship rocked from nearby impacts. People were getting very nervous and fearful after the shaking ended. In her earpiece, Lacus received a report from the captain of her Exaltation that they were under enemy fire. Quietly, she told him to raise the Positron Deflector, but stay on course. After a brief moment, she then ordered him to set her concert to broadcast throughout the ship as she'd handle calming everyone down.

With that relayed, she signaled the band to start back up and for Flay to get into position. Once everyone was ready, she started the next verse of the song.

"Raise a shield to the bullets!" Unknown to anyone who wasn't operating the ship or beside a window, the ship's barrier surrounded the beleaguered vessel in pale green light. The ship continued

trembling from the assailant's weapons striking the shield, but the broadcasting song caught everyone's attention and all panicking slowed to a stop as they listened. "Hold my ground, all I got now! But I'm defenseless, all but helpless if it gives beneath my feet."

"I turn from the mirror, that desperate plea," Flay continued with the next part seamlessly. "I refuse and can't believe those eyes belong to me!"

"Come on, one more breath, my ravaged voice betrays me mid-shout! Will you never hear those final words I failed to choke out?" The redhead continued with the next verse, having practically begged to sing it when she read the lyrics. It reminded her of how she died in baseline, being so close to Kira but unable to express her apology to him before her shuttle was shot down. "I tried to survive by putting all my faith in instinct, but now I regret - What have I do~ne?!"

Then, they synchronized for the chorus, "I say Crier! I say Liar! I say Rise in Hell! I am just about to BURST as they say Wa~ar! I'll wage Wa~ar! I hate Wa~ar! There's no end to this, can't you see that?!"

After several seconds of instrument only, Lacus continued the next verse without Flay.

"A cowardly facade weaves into my voice, as I call for war, blinded by this far-fetched noble cause! Although I had a choice, I believed the lies! But it's all a dream, ending when I open up my eyes!"

"Come on, one more breath, my ravaged voice betrays me mid-shout!" Flay picked up. "Will you never hear those final words I failed to choke out? I tried to survive by putting all my faith in instinct! But now I regret - What have I do~ne?!"

"I say Crier! I say Liar! I say Rise in Hell! I stand gazing down at Death as they say Wa~ar! I'll wage Wa~ar! I hate Wa~ar! They say Fight for Peace, does it exist?"

"My Hand, can you reach it?" Flay held a hand out to Lacus, seemingly like she was reaching out to grab her.

"My Cry, can you hear it?" Lacus held a hand out to Flay, seemingly like she was expecting her to grab it.

"Can you, can you tell me if this 'dream' was worth it?" Their voices blended together seamlessly and it continued for the rest of the song.

"My Hand, can you reach it?"

"My Cry, can you hear it?"

"Can you, can you help me?"

"Wake me from this Nightmare!"

As the song wound down, the attacks stopped and a cautious silence took hold of the ship's inhabitants as they waited to see if it would continue. Several minutes passed and no more attacks came. The passengers returned to normal with a collective sigh of relief and cheered their joy to the redhead and pinkette on the stage. Said pair bowed to the audience while mentally expressing their own relief to each other.

"What the hell? What's wrong with the ship?!" The Blue Cosmos captain raged as weapon control stopped responding. Shortly after that, lights flickered as power slowly started to shut down.

"I don't know, sir! Nothing's responding to input!" The weapons officer replied in a panic.

"We've been shut out!" Came the executive officer's answer.

"How could we be shut out of our own system?! Who could have the ability to hack our computer without anyone noticing?!" The captain

snarled.

Just then, a communication's line opened up with the com officer expressing shock that he didn't activate it. Kira was on the other side of the link.

"Hello, Blue Cosmos bastards," He stated jovially, like he was just calling to make small talk, but it was obvious what he really felt just by looking at his eyes. The only thing in those violet windows was a burning rage that just wanted to smash them and be done with it. "I never thought you assholes had the balls to try and attack my girlfriends while they were on their shakedown tour. Apparently I was wrong and you were that brain-dead."

"Who are you and what have you done to my ship?!" The captain growled at the young man on the other side.

"My name is Kira Yamato," The brown-haired soldier replied with a small bow of his head. "As for what I've done, well... It was your own dumb fault for ripping off my personal design and didn't even bother trying to alter my OS programming. Heck, your spies just copied the OS wholesale and brought it back to their brainless masters, leaving all my personal touches and backdoors in place."

He broke out into a vicious, predatory grin as he continued the explanation. "In other words, your bosses rushed production of their lovely new toys so that they would be able to sink the original they stole the blueprints from on the shakedown cruise and instill fear into the Coordinators. However, because they didn't take the time to make sure they had a new OS for their pirated ships, I am now in control of everything on board your vessel."

"So what are you going to do, you monster? Kill us?" The captain shouted while banging his hand on the arm of his chair. Kira dropped all pretenses and just let his undisguised anger and loathing of the bigots before him sink in with his next words.

"If I really wished to end you, I wouldn't be here talking with you now. I'd have destroyed that ship before you even knew I was here and what was going on. And that is if I was feeling merciful enough to give you all a quick death!"

The smarter officers caught the implications immediately. The not as smart ones just grit their teeth at the obvious threat.

"Now thanks to your database, I know how many of these cheap knockoffs of my design that Blue Cosmos has made and with my OS in the computer, I'll be able to subdue them as well when I catch up to them." A very sadistic grin crossed Kira's face as he finished his address. "Enjoy your flight back to the nearest base on minimum power and only enough facilities to keep everyone alive."

With that, the commlink cut off as most of the ship went dark.

Wow, Kira! Flay spoke over the mental connection she and Lacus shared with their Anchor. *I almost think it'd have been better to just blow up the ship.*

Probably would have been more humane, at least. Lacus commented. *What if they start killing each other in there?*

I have ways to handle that. Kira was relaxing in the luxurious suite he shared with the girls. He sighed as he leaned back from the suite's Master Terminal, an integrated computer system that allowed him to access all the functions of the Exaltation, including special subsystems that weren't included in normal use of the ship. *It's not often I get to act the part of a Magnificent Bastard. Not my preferred role, really.*

Tonight's concert is almost over, Kira. Flay assured him. *When we get back, we can all cuddle on the couch with dinner and a movie.*

Nah, not a movie. Lacus spoke up across the mental connection. *Let's go for something less exciting tonight... though some cuddling*

sounds great.

I'm not feeling like any fancy dinner tonight. How about I order some pizza from room service? Kira proposed. Their answer came simultaneously.

Alright. See you after the concert.

Chapter 16

16.1

The sound of clashing steel rang throughout the Archangel's gym. Flay was currently practicing her fencing skills with Kira. She panted from exertion and her outfit stuck with sweat as her Natural body worked to keep up with her boyfriend's movement. Several times, she took a hit and was very thankful they weren't using actual weapons. When Kira said that he had learned every martial art out of boredom, he meant it.

Soon enough, Flay had enough. She signaled for a halt and stepped back from her partner. Tucking her foil under her arm, she took off her mask and let her breathing stabilize.

"You did good," Kira complimented as he did the same.

"My father had me enrolled in fencing early this Loop, along with ballet and piano lessons," she sighed as she walked over to her water bottle. "It's a shame that physical conditioning doesn't stick, though. I hate how I have to use Out of Loop things to speed it up. Being a Natural sucks sometimes!"

Kira paused in the middle of picking up his own water bottle. He straightened out and looked over at his lover. Flay felt his worry through their shared connection, causing her to look at him.

"It's alright," the redhead smiled reassuringly. "This is much better than not having it at all."

"I still worry," her boyfriend stated.

"Because you're kind," was a response that didn't come from Flay. "It's only natural to fret about the people you care about, even if they do find it annoying at times."

The pair glanced over at the voice's origin, Murrue Ramius. At their confused expressions, she giggled. The Archangel's Captain was dressed in a yellow leotard with a white sweatband and matching leg warmers to complete the 80's exercise outfit.

As her baseline was typical fashionista girly girl before she descended into madness, Flay's reaction slowly became that of disgust, "WHY THE HECK ARE YOU WEARING THAT?!"

"This? Mu said I looked good in it," was Murrue's nonplussed reply.

"Of course he would! If he didn't, you'd probably make him sleep in the pilot's locker room!"

"I'm not that petty!" Murrue responded vehemently. She then huffed, "Besides, it's not like this is my only exercise getup."

"Excuse me, Miss Murrue, but you've already had your required time here today, right? So, why are you using your off-time to exercise?" Kira asked curiously...and to interrupt the building argument.

"Well, I want a bigger Subspace Pocket," she answered with a shrug.

Kira facepalmed as realization hit. "Miss Murrue, expanding the Subspace Pocket doesn't work that way. It has nothing to do with physical fitness."

"Wha? But, Mu said..." Realization hit her too and her expression became murderous. Without bothering to change out of her outfit, she rushed through the door. Her shout felt like it could be heard throughout the ship, "MU LA FLAGA!"

Said blonde man felt a chill rush up his spine, like doom was rushing towards him. Pausing in his work on maintaining his personal Strike, he wondered aloud, "Why do I have this sudden feeling that I'm in trouble?"

16.2

"So what are your plans for this loop?" Murrue Ramius asked Kira as they traveled down the zero-g hallway by the hand conveyor belt on the walls.

"Well, I've already dealt with Rau Le Creuset," the violet-eyed young man listed as he ticked off fingers. "Natarle said that she had something in mind for Muruta Azrael and Djibril. Athrun wanted to deal with his father and Lacus went to assist him."

"Don't forget Mu went with Natarle," the Captain added. "Which leaves the two of us and Flay as the only Loopers currently on board."

"Right... Well, my current plans are just to relax with Flay. My last few Loops were very hectic and I need some detox."

Murrue hummed in understanding as they reached their destination, the galley. The place was empty of even the regular staff as it wasn't a typical meal time. They were just hungry and it was their off-time.

Anyway, they both picked up a tray of the prepared meals. However, after he got his food Kira kicked off the counter ferociously. Murrue turned to stare at her Anchor with surprise and confusion only to see that he had apparently tackled a ninja. The MS Pilot quickly turned the momentum into a spin kick to the assailant's face.

The captain blinked rapidly, "What the hell?"

Kira merely sighed as he set his food down on the table, "So much for relaxing. It seems like we've got a ninja infestation. After all, for every ninja you see there's twelve more you don't."

"But how did you know he was there? Did you actually expect that a ninja was about to attack you?" She asked while staring at the unconscious body as it bounced off the far wall.

"Always expect ninja," was the answer her friend gave.

16.3a

Gundam SEED/Final Fantasy 9

"Well, this takes me back," the brown-haired, violet-eyed Kira Yamato commented to himself as he gazed at the tail waving behind him. "But I'm certainly not dressed like a Saiyan."

He was wearing: a blue, embroidered vest over a white shirt, puffy blue cuffs with no sleeves, blue trousers and off-white boots. On his belt were a pair of large, mismatched daggers. Apparently he was part of a group of thieves/theater troupe called Tantalus which was on its way, by airship, to the city of Alexandria for a performance. The wooden floor creaked a bit as he walked towards the destination his Loop memories told him to go.

The room he found himself was nearly pitch black, so he pulled a match out of a pouch on his belt and lit it. Seeing a large candle set on a table in the middle of the room, he stepped closer and lit it. As the room got brighter, he heard someone call out, "Who's there?"

"It's me, Kira," the monkey boy replied. Seconds later, three young men came out of a connected room off to the right. They were his friends: Sai Argyle, Tolle Koenig and Athrun Zala if they were fantasy humanoids.

Sai had a brutish physique, pointed ears and small fangs poking up from his jaw and wore: a faded red bandana over his head, a dark blue shirt with a massive bandoleer from his right shoulder to left hip, belted cuffs with no sleeves, knee length blue shorts and fur-lined shoes.

Tolle...Kira mentally sighed at seeing what the Loop had done with his friend...had an obvious potbelly with a cylindrical head and facial hair around a rather creepy grin. He had what looked like some kind

of metal chef's hat on his head. Leather shoulder pads were all that covered his upper body, plus more sleeveless cuffs and leather shorts for his legs.

Finally, Athrun looked kind of like Frankenstein's Monster with mismatched colors of skin obviously sewn onto him on his chest, face, arms and left leg. He wore no shirt, but he did have a bandoleer over his right shoulder and two thick belts over his abdomen. Also, he had a large belt on his forehead, covering his eyes. Puffy fur cuffs and fur lined boots completed his outfit with his right leg having a leather knee pad.

As one, the four friends gave the Tantalus salute. Athrun then spoke up, "Hey, Kira! You sure are late!"

"Sorry," Kira replied, relying on his Loop Memories for dialect. He then looked around, "So, where's the boss?"

"Ain't here yet," Tolle answered. Suddenly, after he answered, another door opposite the one Kira's friends came out of and up some stairs opened up. And a very large man with a dragon's head and long neck jumped down and roared at them. Immediately, the four of them readied their weapons as the much bigger man pulled out a very big sword.

What a way to start a Loop... Kira thought to himself.

16.4

Kira grinned as he stood vigil over the massive grill vehicle. He had bought it once he had enough space in his Pocket for it and his Strike Freedom. It cost quite a bit to convert a linear tank into a dedicated grill party vehicle, but he definitely considered it worth it. Especially since he was dealing with a full house in terms of the current party. Not just him, Lacus, Flay and everyone from the orphanage, but all the other Loopers of the branch and a large number of nonloopers: Cagalli, Athrun, Mu, Murrue, Natarle, Miriallia,

Nicol, Yzak, Dearka and pretty much the entire crew of the Archangel there.

There was beach, surf and clear sky; perfect conditions for a barbecue. Surfboards were lined up on provided racks for whoever wanted to use one and more than a few volleyball nets had been set up. Miri had Tolle and Dearka fighting over who got to put sunscreen on her back while Natarle had her own fanclub forming behind her as she applied her own. Murrue and Mu faced off against Cagalli and Athrun in a volleyball match to the cheer of several crew members. Flay was helping Kira at the grill while Lacus performed a small concert for a growing crowd. Yzak was showing off on a surfboard while Nicol sat on his towel, reading.

"This is how it should be," Flay commented as she turned over some bratwurst.

"No war and everyone having fun? I agree," Kira replied while flipping hamburger patties.

"Rather big turnout, though."

Kira shrugged while maintaining his grin, "Not the biggest I've ever had to cater for. I remember one Loop where I got the Minerva's crew to join in after the second war. I had to rent a couple more grill trailers and get half a dozen more cooks to assist me."

"Sounds like it was fun," Flay remarked casually as she started putting the bratwurst on a plate.

"It was. Too bad you and Lacus weren't Awake that Loop."

"Well, we already dealt with Blue Cosmos and Patrick Zala this Loop so let's just enjoy ourselves."

"Right," Kira agreed as he flipped the burgers onto his own plate. Looking over at the rest of the cooked food, he turned and yelled, "FOOD'S READY, COME AND GET IT!"

16.5

"Urgh! I'm not really surprised that we've Looped here like this, but...!" Flay started as she looked over at Lacus. Kira wasn't here so they had no idea who was Anchoring the Loop. They were a pair of S-class Succubi nobles. They wore very low cut unitards, Lacus' was black with a heart-shaped hole near the top and violet leggings while Flay's was red with a diamond hole and blue leggings, with bat-like wings sticking out from their hair and the small of their backs the same color as their unitards. She had short, red hair while Lacus had long, pink hair. "Why do I have to be the Pettanko?!"

The bustier Lacus could only shrug in response as she was holding back her laughter.

16.3b

Gundam SEED/Final Fantasy 9

Ow , was the only thing Kira could think at the moment. That's kind of what it feels like to get steamrolled. *Sometimes, sticking to native Loop abilities hurts.*

It had been going relatively well up to then, though definitely not what Kira would consider a good time. The Tantalus performance ended up with the Queen shooting a fiery Bomb monster at the airship, causing it to crash into the feral bog called the Forest of Evil. Rescuing the Princess that had tried to stow aboard from the forest's controller, the Plant Brain, resulted in the entire area becoming petrified; which included Athrun, who had been caught by a monster after taking a hit meant for Kira. After that, Kira and his group had to fight their way through the Ice Cavern, which was even colder than its name sounded. Especially with the crazy Black Waltz that had been trying to kidnap the princess.

While it got rather crazy at the village they had stopped at, they made it through there just fine. Even the arrival of successive Black Waltzes didn't slow them down too much. The Festival of the Hunt at Lindblum was next and oddly, rather enjoyable despite the fact that it was a bunch of people going around and slaying vicious beasts released all over the city. Kira had ended up winning it after defeating that Zaghnol creature.

Then it all went to hell when a wounded soldier came limping in. The Burmecian soldier died shortly after arriving and asking for help as his kingdom had been attacked. The Regent of Lindblum, Cid who was currently transformed into a giant native insect creature, insisted on everyone enjoying the banquet while his military forces gathered. Princess Lacus put sleeping weed in the food without anyone noticing... somehow... and ran off while everyone dozed with her knight, Sir La Flaga, in tow. Kira found himself rather annoyed that they weren't awake yet and they had managed to pull one over on him.

So Kira and his companions, Vivi the Black Mage and Unawake Murrue Ramius the Burmecian Dragon Knight, gave chase. They tried at a Chocobo's Forest, but the moogle there hadn't seen the young woman Kira described to him. He tried again at the Qu's Marsh, but found no lead while picking up the gourmand, Quina, as a traveling companion. With no other leads, the group of four headed towards Burmecia through the Burmecian temple, Gizamaluke's Grotto.

He got ticked off when they discovered the massive, winged serpent, Master Gizamaluke, had become dominated and they had to fight him. It made him swear to look into ways to break mind control as they defeated him. Kira couldn't tell if the battle had killed Gizamaluke or not, but they couldn't stay to find out as the group needed to check on Burmecia.

They rescued the survivors of the City of Eternal Rain while dealing with the enemy soldiers, mass produced Black Magi. But then they reached the palace and fought against the people responsible.

Alexandria's Queen Brahne stood with her greatest general, an Unawake Natarle Badgiruel, and someone who Kira recognized as Canard Pars; a man with long, black hair and greyish eyes, though this one seemed more... effeminate than usual.

Anyway, to defend a Burmecian soldier who had confronted the invaders, Kira and his companions rushed out to engage them. The four of them put up a good fight against the one-eyed general, but eventually, she just blew them all away with a single attack. So they got to witness the Queen and her benefactor gloat as they all walked off.

Kira struggled to his feet after they left with only one thought in mind, *Next time, I don't hold back as much.*

16.6

"Okay, this is prototype Karma MBT model 5 battle testing," Kira recorded into his laptop. He was hoping for a good run with this one. The previous ones were alright but not up to the standards he was looking for in a Sword of Damocles machine. "Test group: Blue Cosmos armored division. Test crew: Mu La Flaga, Murrue Ramius and Natarle Badgiruel."

He paused before leaning back with a sigh. The Anchor rubbed the bridge of his nose. His in-loop memories told him all he needed to know about this Variant. The assault carrier, Archangel, had been destroyed not long after the destruction of the space colony, Heliopolis, by overwhelming ZAFT forces and the G-weapons had gone down with it. Kira and the others had Woken up to find that the survivors, including them, became renegades after the Blue Cosmos controlled Atlantic Federation tried to have them executed for harboring a Coordinator in their ranks... In other words, a grimderp and cynical version of their baseline.

Now they could have just thrown up their hands and left the Earth Sphere to whatever fate the war had by going elsewhere in the

universe, but Kira had been convinced that it'd be a good opportunity to give many of his Sword of Damocles designs a test run. He hadn't quite liked the thought of using people in a live fire test, but then the Loop threw in a twist that all the Loopers facepalmed at... Zombies, all of the Blue Cosmos forces were becoming zombies. Apparently they had rediscovered and practiced ancient Nazi Magic to improve their soldiers and something went wrong because of course it did.

Yeah, the Loopers decided to get smashed for a few days before using the convenient Zombies for weapons testing. The part that actually freaked them out about this sudden change was the soldiers still maintaining their skill with arms and armor. In fact, the Zombie MS Pilots were a worse threat than normal ones since they weren't as hindered by intense g-forces or the need to rest. Still, with the defenses of Kira's designs, most of the zombified forces weren't a threat.

The previous four Karma designs were decent, but they all eventually just got overwhelmed by numbers as they didn't have enough weapons to deal with a combination of multiple soft and armored targets. This was on top of there being some glaring defects in the designs, like not using Phase Shift or Gundanium for the undercarriage or treads or needing to open the top hatch and risking exposure to shoot the machine guns mounted on the turret. Thankfully, the test crew were Loopers and had several ways to get out safely in case of emergency.

Getting back to the task of testing, Kira opened a radio channel, "Alright Karma, you are go for live fire run. Begin when you are ready."

"Roger that, Command Base," Mu answered back. "All systems calibrated and check out green. Beginning attack run. Wish us luck!"

"Good luck!" Flay spoke over to Kira's left. She was acting as communications officer for the Lesseps-class land battleship they had hijacked from ZAFT. They had no love for ZAFT this loop and the Earth Alliance wouldn't have a similar vessel until after the first

war. Plus, it was mostly designed for use with BuCUE, ZuOOT and LaGOWE Mobile Weapons, which were closer to tanks and thus it was a better choice for transporting and testing the Karma prototypes.

The hanger bay door on the front of the Lesseps-class opened up to reveal the machine in question for its battle. It was obviously influenced by the design of the widespread Linear Tank with a pair of shorter treads on each side, but its armor was all curved instead of angular, about a meter taller and a couple meters wider. The turret had a slimmed down version of the main gun from the Linear Tank on top of a smaller secondary barrel with a pair of machine guns mounted and integrated onto the swivel points. On the tread armor was a protrusion each, two facing forward and two facing back. Finally, it was all protected by Variable Phase Shift Armor on top of a GN Composite hull.

Once it had launched the MBT, the Lesseps-class shot a large flare into the sky. Despite the retention of skill, they were still mindless abominations. Getting their attention with a flare would make them come running with all the firepower they have. Here's where the trial truly starts.

16.7

"Admiral Yamato!" The bright orange hair, black eye patch and red ZAFT uniform immediately identified the speaker as Hilda Harken. Kira had been standing in the Eternal's hanger bay, setting up for the support drop on ORB to repel ZAFT. The leader of Lacus' DOM Trooper squad had walked up to the Captain's lover and saluted out of respect. When the salute was returned, she continued, "What's this I hear about some helicopters dropping with the Drop Pod?"

Kira grinned a bit before gesturing for her to follow him. He walked over to a tarp covering a large object as he spoke, "Not just any helicopters. The supplier suspects that they may be alien in origin due to technologies used in the construction being unknown to him.

After they had been as thoroughly checked as we could do with our level of tech compared to theirs, they were upgraded with some of the latest Cosmic Era tech."

He stopped beside the tarp and turned to Hilda before lowering his voice, "You didn't hear this from me, but the tech is alien compared to ours; however, they don't have any black boxes."

Hilda's eye widened in surprise at the statement. She then mused, "In other words, they're completely capable of being reverse engineered."

"Exactly," Kira nodded. Grabbing hold of the tarp's edge, he lifted it up while saying, "Take a look."

She did so. What she saw left her with questions, but also a sense of awe.

Inside her golden Akatsuki Gundam, Cagalli growled with frustration. Apparently going easy on Yuna and his slimy father meant that they still tried to give that Blue Cosmos bastard Djibril refuge from everyone he managed to piss off with his warmongering. So here she was, having to coordinate ORB's defense against the invading ZAFT Forces. Her military was well trained and she had made sure ORB's artillery and tank units were up-to-date, but against the numbers of similar tech level Mobile Suits and their Coordinator pilots, the defenses wouldn't hold.

"Dang it, Kira! You're late!" She shouted as she blew apart a couple GOUF Ignited with well placed beam rifle shots. Normally, he'd have been here by now with the Infinite Justice in tow for the injured Athrun. Turns out, despite his increasingly incredible piloting skills, if he ends up facing Shinn and Rey in a GOUF Ignited over the sea then he will end up getting taken out. And the number of times he's been unable to avoid getting into one in his attempt to escape from ZAFT can be counted on one hand, not helped by the fact that he couldn't store a Mobile Suit in his Subspace Pocket yet.

Thankfully, the Destiny Gundam had gone back to the Minerva for resupply during their fight. Cagalli found it annoying that he was able to push her as he did, despite all the training she's been through to be a better pilot. Perhaps it was his style, fighting like a beast in a Mobile Suit that could deceive its opponent's cameras. Just one would have made his movements hard to read, but both were very difficult to follow as she was.

The fighting had died down as the ZAFT forces retreated for resupply, but she knew it wouldn't be long before they'd be back and more furious than before. So she took advantage of the break in the fight to head back to HQ and punish Yuna and his father. Having some personal punching bags sounded like just the thing to relax after that crazy battle. Considering she could easily just have them executed for treason, them just getting some bruises and a jail cell was a slap on the wrist. Of course, even if they were eventually let out, they'd be left with little since they'd no longer have anyone willing to support them and Cagalli intended to take advantage of her "marriage" to that manipulative wimp to clean their house of everything, Natarle and Flay's idea.

Once she had satisfied her fury for now, she got a shower and clean pilot suit before heading back to her Mobile Suit. Inside the cockpit, she contacted the control room.

"Any change in the enemy fleet?"

"None, Ma'am. No sign of Djibril either and we're keeping a close eye on all shuttles. If he's still in ORB, we'll find him."

"We'd better," She replied as she walked her Gundam out of the hangar bay. "Otherwise ZAFT's going to eventually break through the defensive lines."

Silence followed that statement. Only a couple minutes of waiting later, the control room contacted her again, "Chief, Mobile Suits are deploying from the enemy fleet!"

"All hands, incoming hostiles!" Cagalli relayed over the comm to her soldiers. "Begin intercepting fire! Watch out for supporting fire!"

Several minutes later, the battle had fallen into a desperate melee as clumps of Mobile Suits engaged in close range combat. ORB's forces put up a valiant struggle, but without additional reinforcements, things looked bleak for the defenders. So of course, by the law of dramatic timing, help arrived by orbital drop; A single drop pod and half a dozen smaller objects descended from the sky. The smaller objects were white and much longer than a Mobile Suit was tall. Their surface was angular with a small dome on top and they tapered out to a relatively small tail. Said tail had a small beehive dome at the end and on the underside near the base, which was angled downward in the same direction as the end one. As the fireball dissipated, the dome on top extended outwards to reveal a second, similar dome.

At the appropriate altitude, the drop pod blew open to eject its precious cargo; three DOM Troopers. As well, the domes on the angular objects began rotating in opposite directions and extended four bright blue beams each. Additionally, the non-MS machines extended out a chain gun on the nose, gatling gun under the fuselage and a pair of stubby wings with additional weapons on the pylons. In their combined dive, the Mobile Suits and now revealed helicopters aimed and launched an assault that blindsided the ZAFT forces. And behind that group was the Strike Freedom, carrying the Infinite Justice behind it by the arm. Once the newest arrival let go, the red Gundam sped off towards the Archangel.

"Attention all forces!" Kira declared over all radio frequencies to both friends and foes. "ORB's cavalry has arrived!"

16.8

The sound of gunfire filled the air as Mu La Flaga and Murrue Ramius were in a strange shootout. For one thing, they were dressed like they were in a wild west film with Mu in a poncho and

cowboy hat and Murrue in a... modified period dress and floral hat. However, their opponents were mostly robots, armored vehicles and mechanical gun emplacements with some human outlaws thrown in for good measure. This sense of strangeness wasn't help by the pair using energy bullet weapons instead of normal ones. Still, they rather enjoyed it, especially as their enemies occasionally dropped a glowing power-up that provided them with weapons stronger or more useful than their default rifles. Yes, it was a game Loop and yes, they stored every weapon they picked up in their Pockets.

Murrue was the sole remaining member of a rich family who had been either kidnapped or killed by a rival family and she hired the bounty hunter Mu La Flaga to assist her in taking them down... That's pretty much all that their in-loop memories told them. They just sighed and shrugged it off before going around and blasting the outlaws and robots. They fought through a wild west town, a gold mine... no one would miss all the currently dug up and unprocessed gold nuggets, right?... a desolate canyon, an ammunition depot and on top of a train to attack another, armored train. Finally, after all that, they found where the head of this rival family was; a giant space ship with the front shaped like an alien face.

Why it hadn't taken off yet, they didn't know.

As they approached the entrance ramp, they were assaulted by a pair of giant sheriff robots like a few others they've destroyed previously. Blowing through those, they ended up inside a giant vault and froze at just how much gold was there. Hundreds of stacks of gold bars, some reaching all the way up to the ceiling a hundred feet over their heads and piles of money bags bloated with gold coins. All of it was the purest gold the pair had ever seen in their lives. Even a small handful would leave them well off in the Cosmic Era.

However, any thoughts of taking the unbelievable wealth for themselves was put on hold as outlaws and defense turrets appeared to deal with them. Giving each other a knowing glance, they began cleaning house... in more ways than one.

16.9a

"You want us to what?" Talia Gladys asked after Athrun made a request.

"My friend is having a beach party in celebration of one of ORB's holidays," The azure-haired Coordinator repeated. "Since the Minerva is currently docked for repairs, I am inviting the crew to come with me."

"And you just expect us to leave the Minerva unprotected?!" Arthur Trine demanded from his spot next to the Captain.

"I know Cagalli and the mechanics she chose to work on the Minerva. I can say with complete confidence that the ship is in better hands than even our own security team." Athrun stated with more than a bit of pride.

That left Arthur gobsmacked and Talia more than a surprised. Athrun hadn't been so upbeat about anything else that had happened on the Minerva before. A distressed looking deputy shared a look with his captain, who was much more unreadable. She then turned her attention back to her best pilot.

"Be that as it may, I can't leave the Minerva alone even to a group you trust so completely."

"Then let the crewmen who want to stay watch over the ship," came his answer. Talia was taken aback by his determination.

"You're being rather adamant about this for something that only seems to be a form of recreation."

Athrun shook his head, "It's not just about the recreation. There's some people there I want you to meet as well. It's not important enough if you don't want to, but..."

Talia leaned back in her office chair and let the silence stretch on in contemplation. Arthur looked upset by this idea while Athrun was completely disciplined. After a few moments, she came to a decision.

"Alright, as a member of FAITH, I'll come with you. I'll make an announcement to the crew about the party and if they want to go, then they can."

Talia Gladys was very much used to wearing her service uniform, so wearing a swimsuit to the beach party was something she had to readjust to. Heck, she couldn't even remember when she last wore one. Still, she had a very nice white onepiece on when she arrived at the designated beach. The first thing that stuck out to her was the Linear Tank that had apparently been converted into a mobile grilling platform with at least half a dozen people tending to the cooking. Second thing was the sheer number of people there, including most of her own crew. There were voleyball nets set up and more than a few surfboard racks. Over a dozen sand castles were being worked on by several people each and some were just there to ogle the sunbathers.

"Good, you're here."

The honey blonde Captain turned to find Athrun in nothing but blue swim trunks and sunglasses.

"So, where are these people I'm supposed to meet?"

"A few of them are currently busy, but the most important one isn't," He stated while walking towards the grill tank. "This way."

With a small frown on her face, she followed behind the younger man. As they got close to the repurposed war machine, Athrun waved an arm. He got a reply wave from a young woman, who started coming their way. As the young woman came closer, Talia could see that she was wearing a onepiece like herself, though it

was more of a silver color... and that she had pink hair. When the lady got within range of the pair, she smiled.

"It's a pleasure to meet you, Captain Gladys. I'm Lacus Clyne."

16.10 - Gundam SEED/Fate/Stay Night

Once again, Shirou found himself inside that spicy dungeon known as Koushuuensaikan: Taizan. There was Kirei, chowing down on his mapo tofu like it's the nectar of the gods. Their eyes met.

"...Do you want some?"

Before the Anchor could reply, an unfamiliar voice answered, "That sounds good."

Shirou turned around to find a young man with short brown hair and violet eyes sitting down at a nearby table. "I'll take three mapo tofu, please!"

Saber's master's eyes bugged out at the order. He turned back to Kirei, who was waiting for an answer.

"No thanks," Shirou managed. The shock that anyone else could want to eat that taste of hell took out some of the usual force he normally refused with.

He saw three plates brought to the violet-eyed young man. The spoon dipped into the hot contents. Opening his mouth wide, the young man took a bite of the food. After swallowing, the young man frowned.

"Is this really the spiciest thing on the menu?"

Shirou's mouth dropped open as the teenager just shrugged before shoveling the food into his mouth.

16.9b

Talia Gladys was confused, "Lacus Clyne? What are you doing here at some random beach party? Weren't you up in the PLANTs calming people down?"

The pinkette frowned, "No, I've been here in ORB since the end of the Bloody Valentine war." She then nodded in a few directions in response to what she said next. "Over there is the orphanage I've been tending and over by the grill on the tank's aft are my lovers."

The flatfooted ZAFT Captain looked over to the orphanage and then the grill, spotting the designated area with a brown-haired young man and a ponytailed redhead young woman about as old as Lacus was. As she was watching, the pair stepped back from the food they just dropped onto the grill's surface and leaned on each other for a moment. Talia blinked before shaking her head.

"You mean, you're no longer Athrun Zala's fiance?"

"Huh..." Lacus looked at the Minerva's Captain like she said ZAFT was a bunch of hippies. "I thought that was common knowledge, considering that I was publicly declared a traitor to ZAFT by Patrick Zala."

Talia flinched, remembering that announcement shortly after Operation Spitbreak's disastrous failure. Why had she forgotten that? *Wait, Athrun knew this... Is this why he wanted me to meet Lacus?*

"Weren't you aware that someone claiming to be you was in the PLANTs, supporting Chairman Durandal?" Well, to be fair, Talia only learned of it recently herself so she had no idea if it had reached ORB yet.

"No, I was not aware. Thank you for bringing it to my attention. Perhaps I should schedule an appointment with the Chairman about this," Lacus stated, her normally kind face being replaced by an

unreadable seriousness. However, the moment passed and her cheerfulness returned. "Sorry for delaying you. I'll let you enjoy the party."

Before Talia could protest, the retired songstress headed towards the mobile grilling platform. The Captain watched her say something to the two cooks she had pointed out. Athrun came back over after Lacus left.

"What'd you end up talking about?" He asked in genuine curiosity, before taking a bite out of a plump hot dog.

"You knew about that 'Lacus' that appeared in the PLANTs and that she was a body double?" Talia accused her fellow FAITH member.

Despite his sunglasses covering his eyes, she could feel him staring at her. After he swallowed another bite, he answered.

"Yes, I did. Entirely by accident though. I ran across her while she was out and about. While I was initially confused, the Chairman explained it to me." Athrun looked out towards the churning surf. "I have no idea what his game is, but the only reason someone makes a duplicate is to take advantage of their image and Lacus still has lots of power over the PLANTs."

"Another Lacus... Don't tell me... The Doppelganger Principle?!" Talia practically shouted in her shock.

Athrun sharply faced her, his own shock obvious despite his shades, "What'd you say?!"

She quickly schooled her expression as people were looking over at the talking pair. They started walking away from everyone else.

"The Doppelganger Principle. It's something I've heard about in relation to body doubles of important political figures over the centuries, but nothing recent," the Captain admitted.

"Kill and replace. If that's the case, then the real Lacus is in danger."

Talia looked upset by the idea. "Damn it, Durandal. What is going on?!"

Chapter 17

17.1

Athrun knew it had been coming. He had specifically worked up the courage to ask Kira to do as close to a baseline run as possible for him just for this moment. The result of Operation Angel Down and his confrontation with Shinn that lead the ZAFT Ace to defect back to ORB where he belonged. Time and again, Athrun's attempts at gently guiding Shinn onto a positive path failed as Ray Za Burrel consistently kept his friend from recovering. After all, if someone is constantly encouraged to rely on their anger while also being let off the hook for their actions, why wouldn't you side with the people who praise you?

Even if it all resets at the end of the loop, Athrun wanted to do this one moment right. No more subtly, no more heart to hearts, no more pure attempts to reason with him. The ZAFT Ace was going to pound the lesson into Shinn's thick skull. And here comes the smug little jackass.

There he was, walking over while waving to get Athrun's attention; all happy that he just tried to kill someone who wasn't trying to kill anyone. He was boasting and receiving praise for his brutality. Athrun had to admit that he was holding his anger towards Shinn in check rather well, at least, until the red-eyed orphan opened his mouth and said that fateful phrase.

"I got revenge, for you too."

Shinn didn't even realize Athrun had moved until he was already laid out by a punch to the jaw. He could only stare up in shock at his fellow pilot's reaction.

"Let me tell you what you just did, you little shit." Despite his previous action, the azure-haired Coordinator had no venom in his

voice... Instead, it was colder than Pluto at the furthest point of its revolution. He walked closer to the young man he just decked and pulled him back to standing so they were looking each other straight in the eyes. "You just killed someone's best friend, walked up to said person while boasting about this deed and then asked him to praise you."

Everyone in the hangar that could hear the FAITH member froze at the sheer implications of that statement. Even Shinn, the reason for it in the first place.

"Revenge?! What did he do to me that deserved it? What did he do to you that deserved it?" The tone was hard and piercing, yet never raised beyond its normal volume levels. When Shinn didn't immediately answer, Athrun demanded, "Answer me, Shinn!"

The red-eyed pilot seemed to regain himself after that, pushing away from Athrun. "I don't have to answer to you!"

Shinn was knocked flat about another punch he hadn't seen coming, "Insubordination. I am your superior officer, Shinn, and a member of FAITH. So yes, you do have to answer to me."

"That's enough, Athrun Zala!" Ray Za Burrel stepped in. "He doesn't deserve this."

The blonde friend of Shinn was decked too, his eyes widening with pure shock. "Insubordination. I don't care if you're the Chairman's yes-man butt-buddy, you are not my superior officer. If I judge it reasonable, then it's within my right to invoke punitive measures."

"Now answer the questions, Shinn." Athrun said to the pilot who was starting to recover his wits.

"He kept butting into our battles, throwing it all into confusion! He got Heine killed!"

"With the express purpose of getting ORB forces to stand down and return home, under the command of the ORB Chief Representative, and then fought back when attacked." Athrun ticked off a finger. Everyone in the hangar was watching to see what was going to happen. "Heine's death was unfortunate, but even ace pilots can slip up or even just get plain unlucky."

Shinn was starting to look a bit confused, like he hadn't ever thought this deep about his motivations.

"He destroyed the Savior, nearly killed you!"

"We fought and he proved the superior pilot that day. Also, other than some small bruises, I was fine after being recovered from the wreckage. So I don't see how I was 'nearly killed'."

After a few moments of silence, Shinn looked angry as he said his next answer, "...He killed Stella!"

All Athrun did next was ask, "Who is Stella?"

That shut Shinn up; his expression becoming one of confusion and disbelief. How could Athrun not know?

"The girl who had been in the med bay..."

"You mean the dying Extended who you attacked other people to get off the Minerva and didn't get court martialed for? The girl who you've only met two or three times total? The girl you gave back to the Earth Alliance, extracted a promise from the guy who picked her up to get her away from the war and then was surprised when that was ignored in favor of putting her in a walking weapon of mass destruction that killed hundreds of thousands of civilians and ZAFT personnel while on a rampage that flattened at least three cities and as many of our battalions?!"

Lunamaria Hawk, a fellow Red-Suit pilot, blinked in realization along with many other crewmen, "Well, when you put it that way..."

17.2a

Gundam SEED/Jurassic World

Kira Yamato was used to waking up as many things, but as a giant dinosaur was new. It took a few moments for him to get used to moving with the non-humanoid body structure, standing up from where he had been sleeping. Looking over himself, he tried to figure out what dinosaur he was.

What I wouldn't give for a gigantic mirror right now. Even my biggest one wouldn't be enough for this job. Perhaps I should look for a window or lake? He thought as he craned his head this way and that to inspect himself. From what he could tell, he had a Tyrannosaurus Rex body structure, but there were features that weren't supposed to be there if so. What the heck was he supposed to be?

The Looper stopped focusing on himself and started inspecting his surroundings. He was in a top open cage hundreds of square feet in size with some trees here and there along the ground. Surrounding the perimeter were security guards, who were looking at him funny.

Oh right, he was supposed to be some wild animal to them so him inspecting himself like he didn't know what he looked like was probably confusing.

Kira felt a Ping. Responding in kind, he briefly wondered what the native Loopers were like. Deciding that he'd find out eventually, the Rex Looper stomped off in search of a good napping spot. He didn't really feel like doing anything else right now.

"And he's been like this for hours?" Owen asked from the monitor room. He was honestly bewildered by this sudden change.

"Yes. Also, there were some reports of odd behavior before it decided to... nap, I guess."

That interested him, "What sort of behavior?"

"Apparently, it had appeared dazed for a few moments before inspecting itself in a confused manner. As one guard put it, it was like it had never seen itself before."

That made him pause. Did a new Looper take the 's place?

Well, better figure out a way to make sure.

17.3

Gundam SEED/Marvel Comics

"I have an army."

"We have a Gundam."

Loki had to pause in confusion. "What's a Gundam?"

The billionaire playboy philanthropist nodded to behind Loki. Out the window was a giant, white robot head. It had two connected v-fins, a white one and a gold one, around a red forehead piece, yellow optical lens for eyes and a small vent where the nose would be on a plate over the mouth area. Finally, on each side under the white v-fin was a hole with what looked like a cannon shell inside it.

Speaking of which, before Loki could recover from the shock, the Gundam opened fire with its head-mounted vulcan guns. When it stopped a second later, Tony stepped out from behind his bar.

"Well you certainly made a mess there, Kira."

"Nothing important was damaged, right?" A young man's voice came from the machine.

"Not really. So... Tech swap?"

"Sure."

17.4

Miriallia entered the Archangel's gym, having finally tracked down her target after several minutes of searching.

"Hey, Kira! I was wondering if..." She paused as the sight before her registered. Kira and Cagalli were currently in the middle of martial arts practice...with lightsabers. Cagalli was dual-wielding a pair with golden yellow blades while Kira had a single violet one in a double-handed grip. The blonde twin was breathing heavily from exertion while her brother was barely winded, as expected of the Anchor. After a few moments of the only sounds being Cagalli's breathing and the low hum of the weapons, the Natural twin charged at her brother.

The Looper watched in awe as the pair fought; the crackle of electricity filled the air with each clash of plasma blade. Cagalli was energy incarnate as she slashed, thrust, weaved and danced around Kira to try and find or make an opening. Her brother, on the other hand, went the path of conservation by moving as little as possible to block or dodge the strikes. Then, as she continued observing, Cagalli stepped back and then connected her lightsabers at the pommels before pressing the assault once more.

After another minute of furious blows, Kira made an opening and ended the battle with a single strike. Miriallia was afraid that the attack was fatal, but Cagalli rolled up and moaned in pain to show she was alright.

"Ow, damn that hurts," the blonde stated as she sat up.

With the lightsabers turned off, Kira offered a hand down to his twin. She huffed, but accepted the hand up.

"So, what'd you want Miri?" Kira asked nonchalantly as Cagalli looked surprised that they had a visitor.

"Er... I." Miriallia shook herself back to reality. "I was wondering if you wanted to join in on the Pathfinder game I'm working on."

"That Dungeons and Dragons spinoff?" Cagalli asked from where she was busy toweling her sweat off.

"Yeah. So, do you guys want in?"

Kira and Cagalli exchanged a look before nodding.

"Sure, we'll be there. What time do you want to start?"

"The first actual game won't be for awhile, since everyone has to make their characters for the campaign. So tonight's just going to be for setup. Meet us at the galley at 1900 hours."

"Got it. See you there." Kira declared as he moved away from Miriallia. Cagalli only shrugged as she headed towards the showers. Miri was about to leave herself when she saw what Kira had set up for his next workout. Hundreds of baseball-sized spherical robots with tiny gunports along their surface were floating around the lone Coordinator. He pulled out the lightsaber she saw him use during his spar with Cagalli... and then he pulled out a second one and activated it; revealing a blue blade.

"Alright. Do your worst!"

17.5

Gundam SEED/Lyrical Nanoha

"You want to learn to be a Device Meister?" Nanoha asked Kira Yamato, the Looper replacing Yuuno Scrya this time around. He was currently a ferret on her dresser, much like baseline; his eyes a

striking violet to contrast Yuuno's green ones. At her question, he nodded.

"My girlfriends, Lacus and Flay, looped here in place of you and Fate respectively awhile ago and acquired copies of Raising Heart and Bardiche." His voice sounded funny to his ears, since it wasn't often he ended up so young during a Loop. "Recently, we've been having some Fused Loops with the Ar Tonelico Branch. They have a form of magitech like you do, except it uses music as the base instead of mathematics. In addition to other forms of magic that we've all been acquiring over the Loops, I was thinking of making some Devices that can combine them."

"Hmm. I know how to make devices, but I mostly just dabble these days. If you really want to learn everything about being a Device Meister, then you'll want to talk with Hayate, Mariel and Shario." The Ace of Aces replied from her bed. They were both ready for sleep after the day they had doing a speed run of the Jewel Seeds, but sometimes you just can't fall asleep immediately.

"Oh right, now I remember," Kira said, embarrassed by his slip. "I had just skimmed my loop memories for the immediately important stuff."

"It's okay," Nanoha giggled at his embarrassment. "I've had a few incidents like that before."

At that moment, the person turned ferret yawned heavily. The magical girl followed a couple seconds later.

"Well, it's really late. Let's get some sleep and get in contact with the TSAB in the morning," Nanoha suggested.

"Sounds good," Kira mumbled as he curled up in his makeshift bed. "Good night, Nanoha."

The Ace of Aces pulled up the covers on herself. "Good night, Kira."

17.6

Gundam SEED/Winx Club

Flora Woke up to find a new face replacing Musa. Taking the few moments it took for her Loop memories to come, the plant fairy inspected the music fairy. Said replacement was very different from her friend; long pink hair instead of short and black and a preference for more formal dresses than Musa's hip styles. She also focused more on a classic singing style compared to Musa's DJ beats. Flora's loop memories came and revealed her name to be Lacus.

The Winx Anchor let out a ping, getting three responses. However, Flora knew that Techna and Bloom weren't Awake yet this Loop. So, she asked Lacus when she came out of her bedroom in the morning.

"Hello Lacus, are you Awake?"

"Yes," the pinkette answered with a smile. "though, I am feeling a bit Loopy."

"That's good," Flora said. Then she frowned a bit in thought. "My friends aren't Awake right now, but there were two other Pings."

"Oh, my boyfriend and girlfriend!" Lacus exclaimed in understanding before continuing in a calmer tone. "I'm talking with them right now. Apparently, they're both in the other schools of this world."

Flora paused at the implication. She frowned when she spoke a moment later, "You're talking to them right now? You guys have telepathy?"

The pinkette frowned in thought, "I guess you could say that, but that doesn't quite convey the full sense of communication. Oh, and they say hello."

"Tell them I say hello back..." The Winx Anchor replied, a bit flatfooted. She hadn't really encountered this kind of scenario before.

She then inquired, "So, I understand your... boyfriend winding up in the Red Fountain school for Specialists, but why did your girlfriend end up in the Cloud Tower school for Witches?"

"In-loop reason, her father pushed her towards dark arts from a young age, which was helped by her having a higher aptitude for negative energy than positive. Out-of-loop reason, she ended up going crazy in our baseline and thus Yggdrasil seems to like putting her into darker roles," Lacus stated casually, but then shrugged. "At least, that's what it feels like to us."

Flora looked sympathetic, "That doesn't sound very nice of Yggdrasil."

"We're used to it," Lacus shrugged again. "And if it hadn't been for the Loops, we wouldn't have this bond now."

17.7

"You're going to experience a series of baseline Safe-Mode loops until they've finished bringing the Mitakihara Branch back?" Miriallia asked after Kira had explained what was happening to everyone who was Looping in the Cosmic Era. They has silently allowed him to explain the circumstances after calming them down from the news of the attempt to restore the branch.

"From what all the Anchors were told, it's to free up the processing power necessary to make a safe attempt and shouldn't last more than a handful of Loops." Kira then shrugged, "Sure, I won't have access to anything from my Pocket, but at this point, my skill alone can carry me through with a bare Strike."

"It's great that a Branch long thought to have been lost will come back," Natarle toasted with the beer can in her hand. She had finished maintenance on some handguns a few minutes ago.

"Well, I'm not going to worry too much about you. You lasted hundreds of years alone before Natarle joined you, so what's another decade or two?" Mu La Flaga stated confidently. "Just be sure to knock around Rau Le Creuset for me during each loop or any appropriate vengeance of your choice really."

"Roger that," Kira smiled with a salute at the request.

"And make sure to slap some sense into me as early as you can," Athrun stated with a wince from his spot beside Cagalli. "Will probably help you in the long run."

"And give me a boot in the ass too after I become Chief Representative," Cagalli declared. "That's when I need it most."

"Okay okay! Calm down with the requests." Kira made a calm down gesture with his hands. "It's not like I'm not going to see you guys again... Besides, that's all standard procedure for me by now."

"Right! Well, let's just enjoy our remaining time until we next start Looping again." Lacus stood up as she said that.

Murrue then smirked, "Beach party?"

"Beach party!" Came the unanimous response.

17.8

Gundam SEED/Lyrical Nanoha

"That's not a good idea," the young Nanoha Takamachi stated to an equally young Lacus Clyne and Flay Allster, who had replaced her friends Suzuka Tsukimura and Arisa Bunnings respectively. They were all dressed in their school uniforms as they were walking home for more private conversation. "The training method you're asking about does more harm than good in the long run."

"We know the risks, but perhaps in moderation?" Flay asked, somewhat desperately. She and Lacus, once they were Awake and realized they were in Nanoha's branch again, had approached their friend and inquired about training methods they could use to catch up with their boyfriend. Since he was also their Anchor, they were asking for the impossible.

"While yes, it's an easy training method when you follow baseline enough to still know how it'll go so you'll know when not to do it; these are the Infinite Loops. Loops can change or be revealed as Variants or Fused Loops in an instant." The far older Anchor lectured. Her time as an instructor served her well for times like this. "Plus, trying to match an Anchor that actively trains himself is foolhardy at best and self-destructive at worst. Trust me, the feeling of being left behind is not uncommon in non-Anchors, but taking extreme methods to try and catch up isn't the answer."

"It's not just about being left behind," Lacus stated quietly, but firmly. Her expression was serious and determined. "It's about being able to defend ourselves when Kira isn't there or when he can't reach us in time. It's about the worst case scenarios and getting out of them with our lives..."

She paused, sharing a significant glance with Flay, then said, "It's about being able to secure happiness when the Loops seem to want to tear you down."

Nanoha looked between the pinkette and the redhead. Seeing their resolve, she sighed before shrugging in defeat, "Okay, you've got me there. That particular training method still isn't a good idea, but I can instruct you on ones you can do on your own for almost as good results."

17.2b

Roxanne huffed as she was allowed into the cage. She knew that she was the best choice in case the wasn't a fellow Looper, but why

didn't they just wait until the park was closed for the day and no one else was around to watch? Shaking her head, she plodded up to the sleeping dino and nudged him.

"Hey, get up," Roxy said in a way non-looping humans couldn't understand. When he didn't do much except turn over and mumble something about it being too early for his duty shift, she groaned, "Great, he's still half asleep... Wait, duty shift? He's some kind of military?"

She nudged him harder. He completed the transition to wakefulness with a start. The hybrid dino stood up with a yawn and some stretching.

"You Awake now, lazy bones?" The female asked teasingly. He turned to look at her after finishing his stretches, blinking in confusion for a moment.

"I must be feeling Loopy. A dinosaur's talking to me," He answered with a straight face. Then he snorted, letting her know he was joking. "But I'm well Anchored."

"Oh, you're an Anchor?" Roxy questioned curiously.

"Yes. My name is Kira Yamato, from the Cosmic Era Branch." He identified himself.

"Cosmic Era? Sounds kind of lofty, doesn't it?" She responded.

He did the best he could to shrug, but it felt very weird in the dino body he current possessed, "I didn't name it."

"Anyway, I'm Roxanne, Roxy to my friends."

"Nice to meet you..." Kira reflexively started to hold out a hand for shaking, but then realized that he didn't the reach. Roxy just did the equivalent to a giggle. "This is going to take some getting used to."

"How about I introduce you to the others?" She began to turn towards the gate, but then paused. "Er, do you have a way to assume human form?"

"Nope. Don't have much experience with shapeshifting magic or the like yet, though I do know magic."

Roxanne nodded, finishing the turn she had started. "Okay, I can teach you what I know if you want."

Kira moved to follow after her. "I'd like that."

17.9

Gundam SEED/Final Fantasy 9 - Continued

After the group had recovered from the defeat, they made their way to the maniacal's Queen's next target, the giant tree city of Cleyra. Normally, it was protected by a devastatingly powerful sandstorm that could abrade exposed flesh in seconds. However, it seemed like the sandstorm had gotten weak enough that Kira and his friends could enter it without much protection required.

It took all day, but eventually the group of four made it passed the sand and monsters to reach the city in the massive tree's canopy. They were greeted kindly by the inhabitants and were directed to the inn where they got food to eat and a place to sleep for the night. In the morning, the Burmecian Murrue went to the King to inform him of the impending attack by the Alexandrian Forces. Everyone else went about trying to find things to do while there: Viva sat down by the city's small lake and its waterfall, Quina went looking for more food... and Kira had to rescue Quina when s/he jumped into the swirling sandpit near the entrance of the city.

So yeah, he found some treasure thanks to that, but it was just him and the strange glutton had to fight their way back up the trunk again. By the time they made it back, the Antlion whose pit Quina

jumped into was agitated something fierce by something. Kira wasn't sure what was going on, but he fought back when it attacked everyone present. Defeating that beast caused it to sink back into the sandy hole it lived in.

"This is an ill omen indeed," The Burmecian King worriedly stated. "The Antlion is a peaceful creature. For it to get so aggressive as to attack people..."

He let the implication hang in the silent air. Kira stepped forward a moment later.

"Alexandria's attack will be imminent. Is there any way to enhance the defense?"

The King looked to a giant harp with a glimmering red stone suspended over it.

"The Desert Star powers the sandstorm, which weakens overtime. To restore the flow of power, we shall perform the dance ritual that first called the swirling sands forth."

Several Cleyran maidens dressed in matching pink dresses entered the room, one of which took position by the harp.

"Lady Murrue, please join in the ritual," the King asked Murrue. "The power of a Dragon Knight added to the ritual will make the sandstorm stronger than ever."

Murrue nodded her consent at the request. Everyone else walked off to the left side of the room to avoid getting in the dancers' way. The replaced Burmecian took the position in front of the dancing formation, looking out of place in her red armor but obviously familiar with what she had to do. Then the music started.

Kira was blown away at the sheer skill of the dance and how easily the Sleeping Murrue integrated herself into the routine despite having never trained with the other dancers. With how close they

had to get, any mistake could easily involve more than just the one who tripped yet despite the last minute replacement, they moved like they had trained together for years.

However, in the middle of the breathtaking ritual, the harp's strings abruptly snapped and the music stopped. The sandstorm outside disappeared in streams of bright light. As Kira watched, he had a very bad feeling about the situation.

17.10

Gundam SEED/Turn A Gundam/Black Lagoon

Kira and Flay privately mused over their mental connection about the mission briefing they had received from Dutch and Benny. A very rare kind of Mountain Cycle was their objective. Normally, Mountain Cycles contained a scant amount of advanced, humanoid machines under a kind of nanomachine cocoon. Occasionally, there was the odd spaceship among the discoveries. However, this was the second one out of hundreds discovered that had a near fully untouched military base inside it.

Why it was so close to Roanapur? They didn't know, but apparently the first base discovered in a Mountain Cycle specifically listed that location as home to some world changing project. Lagoon Company had been hired to find the specific piece of technology that was said to be inside that Mountain Cycle or if they could not find it, then either find information as to its current whereabouts or secure the database. Hence, why they were given a card key.

"Our client offered a sum that made our last five jobs look like pocket change," Benny stated. "We were given half the payment upfront. He even gave reasons for why he did so."

Dutch took over for explaining that. "To cut it short; by paying half upfront, he proves that he does have the money to pay us while also giving us an incentive to do the job. Probably had a number of

mercenaries who cut out after being paid or betrayed him before he could pay them because they didn't believe he'd actually pay up."

Well, when all you fight for is money... Flay snarked across the mental connection. Kira snickered back over the same line. Out loud, she said, "Okay, so we're getting paid to get something from an ancient military base before anyone else can. What exactly is our target?"

"A Mobile Suit equipped with a nanomachine production system," Benny stated, pulling something from a pocket. It was a photograph of a Mobile Suit that Kira really wished was no longer there. "Called the Turn-A."

17.11

Another day, another loop for Kira. Natarle and Mu La Flaga Woke up around the time they were supposed to be transfered over to other posts, but no one else did. Now things were gearing up for the final battle as normal and Kira could only sigh. There was only so many ways to make a climatic battle between three opposing forces challenging before it just became droll. It has also been a couple dozen loops since the last Variant, much less Fused Loop.

So, the battle plan hashed out by Cagalli, Lacus, Murrue and Natarle was for Natarle's Dominion to take Mu's Lightning Strike and Kira's Freedom and spearhead the Four Ships Alliance's thrust into the enemy forces. Now, Kira sat in his cockpit and waited for the signal to launch. Mu came in over the radio.

"Hey Kid, got a moment?" He started jovially. Then he got more serious as he continued. "I wanted to know, just when was the last time you really cut loose in a battle?"

Kira just looked at him mildly confused. The "older" man shook his head warily.

"Seriously, Kid. You need to look out for yourself more often. I've noticed how stressed and meloncholy you've been acting lately. You're like a tightly wound spring in need of some tension relief. Go ahead and blow off some steam, it'll do you good."

The Anchor sat there in silent contemplation. After several seconds, the Dominion's captain spoke up over the comm.

"Kira, as your commanding officer, I order you to hold nothing back. Go all out and give them hell." She sounded like she'd raise her beer can in cheer if she had one in her hand, which she didn't because she was on duty.

Taking a deep breath, Kira let a sigh of release. With a look of fierce determination, he took hold of the controls.

"Alright then. Kira Yamato, heading to catapult!"

The elite Gundam unit marched with purpose. All before him would fall.

"Hey, Captain... are you getting the feeling that everyone else in the Four Ships Alliance is suddenly redundant?"

The Freedom was secured to the Dominion's catapult. Its Phase Shift Armor flared to life.

"Kira Yamato, Freedom, LAUNCHING!"

The pilot was pressed into his seat from the g-forces of his Mobile Suit being flung from the ship. Then suddenly, hundreds of feet from the ship, he vanished. Almost everyone watching became confused and concerned. Moments later, however, he re-emerged... they think. It looked like the Freedom, but it had different wings and gold, glowing joints. The surprises didn't stop there, however.

More Mobile Suits began to appear seemingly out of nothing. Hundreds of Strikes, Strike Rouges, what looked like knockoffs of

the Strike and a few dozen white and grey MS with a gold crown-like antenna, all equipped with a variety of Striker Packs. Speaking of Striker Packs; for every MS wearing a one, there seemed to be three Gunbarrel and/or Ootori Strikers flying around in autonomous mode. Then there was several dozens of a similar MS with their own style of Pack and with them were their own remote delivery system flying around with beam guns ready. On top of all that were still more; hundreds of green MS with one or two shoulder shields, blue MS that looked similar to the green except with some additional spikes and mostly black MS with more bulk. They were all cycloptic and shared a style of Pack also different from the Strike and the other MS's line. As if an afterthought, a few dozen Freedoms finished the lineup.

Natarle sat slack-jawed in her Captain's chair on the bridge of the Dominion as she watched the display. She opened up a comm-link to Mu La Flaga's Strike.

"Were you watching that?!"

"I did more than watch," The Commander stated with awe in his voice. "He's making my ability to use Gunbarrel Pods look like something a toddler could do."

"Wait... You mean, he's controlling all of those with his mind?!" Natarle was flabbergasted.

"Captain, you've known him the longest... Why is this a surprise to you?" Mu asked curiously, his mind starting to recover from the overwhelming power before him.

"Other than his Strike Freedom, I've never seen him USE remote weapons! Has he been practicing this kind of thing during his many Loops alone? How many MS are there, anyway?"

Mu was silent for a second, replying in a bewildered tone, "Okay, he just told me that there's around eight hundred Bit Mobile Suits alone

and over two thousand, six hundred of the autonomous Striker Packs and DRAGOON Flyers... I need a freaking drink."

"Looks like you were right, Commander. He did make the Four Ships Alliance redundant. Hop over to my ready room, I need a drink myself and we suddenly have some free time."

As she got out of her chair and left the room unnoticed due to all eyes on the massive one man army, Flay Allster Woke up. When her mind adjusted to the shift, she looked out at Kira's remote controlled regiment.

Aw, there's not going to be any left for me by the time you're done, She sent over the mental connection.

Stress relief, Captain Natarle's orders, the mental equivalent of a shrug was her answer. A moment later, a phantom kiss caressed her cheek.

Fine... But I call dibs on the next big battle.

Yes, dear.

Kira Yamato lead the charge of his remote controlled army. It was the largest massacre that included no loss of life in the history of the World.